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ABSTRACT

There seems to be an assumption among many people that parents can mold the later adult personality of their offspring by manipulating their childhood upbringing. To tease out the variables in childrearing and to discover some of the sources of the childbearing practices of mothers in the 1980s, a study of sisters and their mothers (N=48) in the Wellington, New Zealand region was undertaken. Pairs (N=50) of sisters between the ages of 28 and 38 who had children were interviewed about their perceptions of their mothers' ideas on breastfeeding, toilet-training, "spoiling," and mealtime rules. They were asked what they remembered about their mothers' attitudes toward discipline, education, "working mothers," sexuality, and racism. The women were asked to respond to an audio tape which featured the statements of a 6-year-old child in various play situations. The results demonstrated differences in the disciplinary ideas of the 1980s sisters and the 1950s mothers. The women interviewed were questioned about whether they thought that they were following their mothers' ideas. A large number said that they heard their mothers' voice in their heads. Thirty-one percent said that they were following their mothers' ideas, 40% said that they had modified them, and 29% said that they definitely were not following their mothers' ideas. Alternative sources of information were found to be books, early childhood organizations, other family members, friends, and professionals, but not television. The questionnaire schedule is appended. (Contains 93 references and 21 tables.) (ABL)

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hearing

my mother's voice

A STUDY OF SISTERS AND MOTHERS

BEVERLEY MORRIS
N Z C E R

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HEARING MY MOTHER'S VOICE

A Study of Sisters and Mothers

Beverley Morris

New Zealand Council
for Educational Research

1992

New Zealand Council for Educational Research
P.O. Box 3237
New Zealand

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HEARING MY MOTHER'S VOICE: A STUDY OF SISTERS AND MOTHERS

ABSTRACT

There seems to be an assumption among many people that parents can mould the later adult personality of their offspring by manipulating their childhood upbringing. Thus parents can be blamed for their children's shortcomings. The many variables in childrearing severely weaken the assumptions that underlie this impression. The ever-increasing rate of social and economic change is but one factor parents have to contend with.

To tease out some of these variables in childrearing and to discover some of the sources of the childrearing practices of mothers of the 1980s, I undertook a study of sisters and mothers in the Wellington region.

I interviewed 50 pairs of sisters between the ages of 28 and 38 who had children, and who were living in different socioeconomic circumstances, about their own upbringing in the 1950s and 1960s. They were asked to recall their perceptions of their mothers' ideas on breast-feeding, toilet-training, "spoiling", and mealtime rules. They were asked what they remembered about their mothers' attitudes to discipline, education, "working mothers", sexuality, and racism.

The women interviewed were asked to respond to an audio tape which featured the statements of a 6-year-old child made in various play situations. These responses tested the mothers' reactions regarding spontaneous offers of help to the child, jealousy of the baby, assaults on their self-esteem, and their support of the child against a playmate. The results demonstrated differences in the disciplinary ideas of the 1980s sisters and the 1950s mothers.

The women interviewed were questioned about whether they thought that they were following their mothers' ideas. A large number said that they heard their mothers' voice in their heads. Thirty-one per cent said that they were following their mothers' ideas, 40 percent said that they had modified them, and 29 percent said that definitely they were not following their mothers' ideas.

The alternative sources of information about childrearing were found to be books, early childhood organisations, other family members, friends, and professionals, but not television. Half of the 1980s fathers are sharing the responsibility for the day-to-day decisions about the welfare of the children. The pressing need to re-enter paid employment has altered the women's ideas of childrearing.

Though these 1980s mothers are "hearing my mother's voice", the transmission of the previous generation's concepts is affected by demographic changes in the size of the family, the partner's ideas, and changes in the role of the mother, giving her more independence and personal choice.

Chapter 1

THE CONCEPTION

Parenting

There is a tendency in New Zealand for parenting - either a lack of it or the wrong kind - to be held responsible for a variety of social problems such as increasing crime, promiscuity, and drug abuse (Max, 1990). Seldom are parents praised for the good work that they do. In keeping with the belief that there is something wrong with the way we raise our children, submissions from the New Zealand community to various bodies such as the Royal Commission on Social Policy, the Roper Committee on Violence, and the Curriculum Review have all called for more parent education as a solution to social ills. Conflict can arise between the nuclear family's responsibility for standards of childrearing and society's demand for law and order.

But what kind of parent education and what style of parenting should be promoted? Moreover, since ideas about parenting alter from generation to generation it is difficult to pinpoint any one set of beliefs or practices as being responsible for particular social problems. The roots of current disorder may lie in the childrearing practices of the permissive sixties or equally in earlier more rigid methods.

This view assumes that childrearing is a reasonably straightforward process and that the way in which parents treat their children determines in large part their adult personalities and behaviour. This view also assumes that a society is determined by the sum of its individual personalities. Surely, however, there are mutual and reciprocal relationships between parents and children (Clarke-Stewart, 1988). It has been pointed out that children arrive in the world with individual characteristics and that these characteristics may have an important influence on the way the parents conduct themselves as mothers and fathers (Harper, 1975). Parental beliefs may then function more to justify what parents happen to do rather than determining their childrearing practices (Lambert *et al.*, 1979).

Although there is evidence of plenty of rhetoric about the need for "better" parenting it is by no means certain how parenting is learned. Nor do we understand very clearly the limits of education as an influence on what parents actually do in comparison with the effects of factors such as family size and financial resources. Popular definitions of parental roles are themselves affected by family size and whether or not mothers are needed in the paid work force.

Today few families live in extended family households and this means that parents often lack immediate support when they are faced with responsibilities and problems in bringing up their children. The need for such support accounts in part for the widespread occurrence of early childhood centres and playgroups in New Zealand. Such agencies develop their own

views of appropriate parenting.

Despite population changes and economic shifts a dominant ideology is apt to remain relatively resistant to change - even in the face of major shifts in social arrangements. For example, parenting ideology in Western societies is based on the model of the married heterosexual couple with children, and a gender division of labour where the father is breadwinner and provides economic support for his dependent wife and children, while the wife cares for both husband and children. But the New Zealand census of 1986 revealed that only about one-third of family households conforms to this definition. Further, the average number of children in these households has decreased from 5 at the turn of the century to 2.1 at the present time. This reduction has not been steady. In the years after the second world war there was a marked increase in the number of children born resulting in what came to be referred to as a "baby-boom".

Whose Advice?

There have always been "experts" who have offered parents advice on how to bring up their children. Plato, Rousseau, Freud, and Montessori all put forward their own form of advice.

In the early twentieth century the most influential adviser in New Zealand was Sir Truby King, the founder of the Plunket Society. While making a positive contribution to the decrease in infant mortality by his insistence on the importance of fresh air, good nutrition, and hygiene, his ideas on childrearing were based on a rather rigid form of behaviourist psychology which stressed regularity and routine. His doctrine incorporated regularity in feeding schedules, toilet-training, times of mothering (cuddling), and routines for sleep. Plunket nurses were trained to advise mothers in the use of these of methods and to supervise their implementation.

The first major challenge to the kind of ideas promoted by Sir Truby King came from the work of Dr Benjamin Spock, an American paediatrician who in the early 1950s advocated love, commonsense, and flexibility in the care of babies and young children. His message was well received by many parents and especially by those whose children did not fit easily into the Plunket regime. His opponents labelled him as "permissive". Dr Spock signalled a move from the stern control of the very young to a benign steering of embryonic adults. One outcome of the shift in attitude was a greater acceptance of the view that babies differ amongst themselves and that the way in which they are cared for needs to take account of this fact.

Dr Spock opened the door to new ideas in parenting. He has been followed by many other experts who have both enlightened and confused mothers. Should a mother follow the principle of "freedom" (Ritter, 1959), "control" (Dobson, 1977), or "commonsense" (Leach, 1983)?

Personality Characteristics

In a family of 2 or more children, similar childrearing approaches do not necessarily produce similar results. Given broadly the same treatment children do not all turn out alike. One reason suggested for particular differences is birth order and this was a popular topic for research in the 1960s.

Mothers have long been able to identify inborn traits in their infants. Thomas, Chess, and Birch said that mothers use 1 of 3 categories to describe their babies; "easy", "difficult", and "slow to warm up" (Thomas *et al.*, 1963). Fortunate the parents whose first-born falls into the first category! Both inherited characteristics and environmental influences play their part in constructing the developing personality.

Comparative Studies

What contribution do parents make to their children's development? Some of the most interesting work in this area was carried out by the anthropologist, Margaret Mead. She was interested in the effects of differences in parenting on adult personality. Margaret Mead lived in a variety of cultures to study their childrearing practices and to describe the adult personalities in the culture. [Her first essay into field anthropology was carried out in Samoa where I was living as a child just after her *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1929) was published. In the light of Mead's findings, my parents were pleased that we were returning to New Zealand before my adolescence when I might be contaminated by the free and easy attitude towards sex!]

Sears, Maccoby, and Levin, in 1957 made a study of how American mothers were bringing up their children from birth to age 6. This study was followed by many similar ones carried out in a variety of cultures. Examples include *Childrearing and Personality Development in the Philippines*, Guthrie and Jacobs, published in 1966, and *Six Cultures: Studies of Childrearing*, by Whiting, published in 1963. An interesting investigation comparing the values of English-speaking parents and French-speaking parents in Canada was undertaken by Lambert, Frasure-Smith, and Hamer in 1979. They applied the same procedures with a sample of mothers from 10 countries in Europe, Asia, and America.

James and Jane Ritchie (1970) replicated the study by Sears and his associates. They interviewed 150 New Zealand mothers on many facets of their childrearing practices. One of their conclusions was that there was a Victorian underlay still present in the New Zealand family.

The Role of the Mother

The growth of the women's movement has brought an ever greater tension between the romantic ideal of motherhood as self-sacrifice and a right for mothers to assert the worth of their own needs. As married women returned to paid employment in the 1960s they began to question the role of housewife as their only choice. Embedded in the ideal of motherhood as a career were tensions that later became difficult to contain (May, 1987).

Betty Friedan analysed women's malaise in a landmark book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). In New Zealand, Jenny Phillips spoke strongly against imposed ideas of female identity and sexuality. She was a young woman who on becoming a mother had felt ambivalent about the experience. She enjoyed being a mother but felt a severe loss of status in society (Phillips, 1987). She acknowledged the emotional rewards of involvement with a dependent child but was disenchanted by the low prestige, long hours of care, and feelings of failure and isolation.

The relationship between a woman and her children is not an abstract one but is a mesh of daily interactions, structured by the woman's responsibility for the children and lived out

historically and in particular physical conditions. As Nancy Chodorow put it, "Women's mothering is not just a set of behaviours but participation in an interpersonal, diffuse, affective relationship" (Chodorow, 1978).

Some writers have suggested that ideas of the modern family as a private world of loving relationships standing in opposition to a harsh public world obscures the continuing economic importance of the family and its invasion by state agencies which seek to regulate its childcare activities (Elliott, 1986).

The uncertainties experienced by many mothers hark back to coercive definitions of motherhood - that it is something pre-given and innate which nature has ordained and there can be no questioning of it. But with more education and a better understanding of her own character and needs the mother of today is questioning and seeking solutions to the dilemmas in her life.

The Life-History Approach

What is the source of the ideas about childrearing held by New Zealand women in the 1980s? I was attracted by the life-history approach illustrated in the book edited by Sue Middleton (1987). She interviewed teachers and showed how their personal histories had affected their teaching practices. To what extent do women learn from the experience of their own upbringing? What parenting skills do they learn from their own experience and what do they discard?

My response to these questions was a decision to interview sisters who were born in the 1950s about their memories of how they were raised and then about how they were bringing up their own children. The relationship between the pairs of sisters and their experience of living in the same family system during childhood was an important feature of the investigation.

By choosing to study sisters rather than brothers or mixed siblings, I was able to compare information from individuals of the same sex and gain a fuller description of their mother's life style. The relevance of gender in comparing the 2 generations and the 2 sisters is important when drawing conclusions about what influenced their present views on bringing up children.

The sisters were born into postwar families. These families appear at first to have been struggling for economic security but to have experienced greater affluence by the time the sisters were adolescent. While unstable economic conditions have recurred, the sisters' goals for their own children are for the most part optimistic.

The aim of this investigation was to study how women's current aspirations towards equity in status, income, education, childcare, and working conditions are manifest in their ideas about bringing up their own children and how much they rely on memories of their mothers' ideas on childrearing.

Chapter 2

SELECTING THE SAMPLE

Background to the Study

Over the past 6 years I have undertaken a series of interviews based on the interpersonal relationships of women within the setting of the family. The results of these studies have been discussed at workshops held during conferences of the Women's Studies Association. The papers included "Women's Changing Roles as Mothers" (1984), "Mothers and Adolescent Daughters" (1985), and "Women and their Mothers-in-law" (1987).

In the first study I noted how each woman reacted to being "transformed" by motherhood and how aware each was about the changes required in her roles. For the second study I interviewed 12 feminists about their relationships with their adolescent daughters. I found that they believed that their liberated ideas had rubbed off on their daughters. In the last study I found that relationships with mothers-in-law, even when not cordial at the start, improved upon the arrival of grandchildren - an event which solved the problem of what to call the mother-in-law!

There is a notable tradition of such small-scale studies having produced valuable insights into family processes precisely because their small sample enabled a sensitive and flexible handling of the data. This tradition includes Bott's study of family networks (1957), Oakley's study of housework (1974), and Boulton's study of being a mother (1983).

Because I was interested in discovering what the mothers of today thought about their childrearing role and what their practices were in bringing up their children, I decided to undertake a small-scale research study by interviewing 100 women on this subject. As a model for successful interviewing of women, I followed the guidance given in the chapter "The Realities of Interviewing" by Ann Oakley in Helen Roberts (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research* (1981).

For analysing differences in childrearing, it seemed to me that it would be advantageous to interview sisters of the same family. They have their upbringing in common; yet in their styles of parenting, one would expect differences as well as similarities. Among the many variables which could affect the parenting behaviour of each sister, were her education, her subsequent employment, the characteristics and attitudes of her partner, and the amount of support she received in the early months of motherhood. Here was an opportunity to try to account for some of the diversity of childrearing patterns in New Zealand.

I had hoped to restrict my sample to women whose ages fell between 28 and 38 years, thus placing them in the "baby-boom" cohort of the 1950s born to "men and women who had their lives disrupted by World War 2" (May, 1987). Despite this intention there were in the

final sample 7 instances where the older sister's and 5 where the younger sister's ages fell outside this range, as is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Ages of Women Interviewed

Age in years	N
Under 28	5
28	7
29	5
30	12
31	9
32	12
33	10
34	8
35	6
36	6
37	8
38	5
Over 38	7
Total	100

By interviewing 2 members of the same family, I was able to confirm most of the factual information about the family of origin and obtain some idea of their mother's attitudes regarding children. I recognised the 2 daughters might well have looked at their mothers from slightly different perspectives.

Within the families the women interviewed were not necessarily the closest in order of birth. As Table 2 shows, the women came mainly from families of 4 or more children, and so the constellations of and relationships among siblings varied. (Four families included stepchildren or adopted children.)

Table 2

Number of Children in Family of Origin

No. of children	No. of families
2	1
3	8
4	14
5	12
6	2
7	2
8	3
9	1
10	2
11	0
12	3
13	1
14	1
Total	50

A pilot study testing the questionnaires was conducted in March 1988. My concern was that I had asked the "right" questions to obtain useful data for the study. After the pilot interviews I clarified a few parts of the schedule, changed the wording of some questions, and added to the investigation a question about the acquisition of knowledge about sex development. The 50 pairs of sisters in the final study were all drawn from the Greater Wellington region. I interviewed them individually throughout 1988 in their own homes, apart from 4 instances where the sisters were living in the same house or visiting each other; in these circumstances they were interviewed separately. I tried to complete the interviewing of both sisters within 2 weeks of the initial visit.

Our memories of childhood are not always reliable and so I surveyed the literature on memories. Akert (1982) says that a continuous self-definition is constructed from memories of past experiences selectively sampled to build up a personally pleasing and recognisable self. Within this are elements of episodic memory concerned with unique, personal experiences dated in the rememberer's past and these can be invoked by questioning (Tulving, 1983). When the women interviewed had difficulties with recall, I assumed that they were too young at the time to remember details. Some of the women's comments were based on what they had heard from their family members or from viewing photos and objects which had been in the family for some time.

In the interviews many women began by claiming that their memory was not good but found as the questioning proceeded that memories came flooding back, bearing out Marcel Proust's suggestion that childhood memories are tied to places as much as to people. Where there was genuine difficulty I did not probe but after a short lapse of time went on to something else. Often later in the interview the respondent referred back to the question and

supplied the missing information. The women seemed to appreciate the interest in their life-histories, and those who appeared at first suspicious or diffident soon warmed to the task in hand.

Although the right to confidentiality was emphasised at the beginning of each session when I pledged not to use any names in my final report nor to give any details by which people could be identified, very few seemed to be worried about this aspect of the exchange. There was an occasional remark like "you won't tell my sister, will you?" over some mild but embarrassing revelation. Twice I was struck by the dovetailing of significant episodes in their childhood memories.

As it happened, having lived in the Wellington area for some 60 years and having been associated with a number of women's organisations, I met among the 100 women interviewed daughters of distant relatives, friends, former neighbours, and well-known public figures. But this seemed to make no difference to the candour of their replies.

Who Made Up The Sample?

I can say with feeling that the sample was not easily acquired! I needed the names of 50 women between the ages of 28 and 38 years, who had a sister in the same age range living in the greater Wellington region. They also had to be mothers - and be willing to be interviewed.

I sought help from friends, principals of primary and intermediate schools, social workers, kindergarten staff, playcentre parents, Plunket nurses, the Women's Studies Association, the Multi-birth Association, Te Kohanga Reo, and other groups. Though I considered putting an advertisement in a free weekly paper which goes into every household around Wellington, this idea was discarded since I could have been overwhelmed by an excess of numbers when only 50 names were required.

The names of the mothers given to me were followed up by a phone call to make appointments for the interviews to suit them. All those approached, with 2 exceptions, agreed to be part of my study. Of the 2 refusals, one mother had just suffered a traumatic experience with her young daughter's health and the other had recently left a women's refuge.

The 100 women in the sample included 3 sets of identical twins, 12 Maori women, a pair who were New Zealand-born Samoans, a pair who were New Zealand-Chinese, and 2 who were South African-born of Jewish extraction.

An attempt was made to obtain a sample of women who were representative of a range across the socioeconomic spectrum. I chose the occupation of the women's partner as most useful in indicating the socioeconomic level of the family. The Elley-Irving Socioeconomic Index (1981 Census Revision) places males in the New Zealand labour force into 6 categories, but as Table 3 shows, I have added a further category - (unemployed).

Table 3

Occupations of Partners (Elley-Irving Index)

Occupational level	Partners %	NZ %
Level 1 (professional)	13	8
Level 2 (technical)	22	11
Level 3 (managerial)	20	23
Level 4 (service)	27	27
Level 5 (trade)	8	17
Level 6 (unskilled)	4	8
		(farmers) 6
(Unemployed)	3	-
Missing solo parents (female)	3	-
Totals	100	100

As is usual in samples of people in their thirties drawn from urban locations, my sample was weighted more to the top of the New Zealand scale and underrepresented in the lower 2 categories.

Half a day was allocated for each interview to allow time for travel and 1 to 2 hours for the questioning. One appointment took 3 months to negotiate because the mother was so busy with the sporting activities of her husband and sons, as well as working full time, that she could not find the 2 hours needed.

While the longest visit took over 2 hours, the shortest was completed in 40 minutes. In the case of the latter, the arrangement was that I should arrive at the home about 6 p.m. when x finished work and then collected her 2 children, aged 6 and 1, from a friend. When I reached the address given me, 2 members of the street committee were also waiting for x. Soon her partner arrived and let us into a tiny front room. When x appeared, she sized up the situation, asked her partner to buy fish and chips, gave the baby a bottle, fixed coffee and carrot cake for us all, and sat down on a sofa beside me to answer my questions quickly but thoughtfully.

Procedure

To obtain data about childrearing practices, I compiled an interview schedule consisting of 47 items. I gave a copy of this questionnaire to the woman being interviewed so that she could follow the format while I wrote down her answers. Before starting on the interview questions, I briefly explained the sequence of the schedule. (For the schedule *see* Appendix 1.)

In the first section (A), I asked for background material about the interviewee. Then in section (B), details from her parents' biographies were covered. Section (C) began the open-ended questions concerning patterns of family living and childrearing practices. The woman being interviewed could see what was being recorded and so had the opportunity to voice any unease about what she had meant in her replies.

The answers to the open-ended questions were coded into several categories for entering into the computer. Later, on completion of the interview, I revised these coding categories to increase consistency. It seemed important to use open-ended questions as the yes/no approach leads to radical paring down and distortion of the meaning of the data (Keats, 1988; Mishler, 1986).

Section (D) consisted of responses by the woman interviewed to a 3-minute tape recording which I had prepared. It was based on a schedule from a Canadian study by Lambert, Hamers, and Frasure-Smith. A simulated episode was tape recorded. In this episode, a mother is presumed to be sitting in her living room while her 6-year-old child plays on the floor beside her. The child asks the mother a series of questions and makes comments. The script was designed to elicit, from those listening, responses which would reveal the mothers' disciplinary style. The taped script was recorded by an 8-year-old girl from a Wellington school. Neither her age nor her sex was identifiable on the sound track.

The final section (E) consisted of questions about what the women believed to be the sources of their ideas on childrearing. I also tried to examine their feelings towards their sisters. From the descriptions, I was not always able to recognise the other sibling! To round off the interview, the women were asked what their goals and hopes were for their children.

Chapter 3

1950s CHILDREARING PRACTICES RECOLLECTED

The 1950s Family

The parents of the women interviewed were mainly from the group of men and women who married after World War 2 and settled down to create a home and raise a family. At that time, the husband's role was clear - he was to be the head of the family and the breadwinner. For the wife, the ideals of true womanhood and domesticity were those which had not changed since the beginning of the century. May (1987) notes that "these post-war women in their roles as mothers, workers and wives provided the models against which the children of the next generation were measured". I wished to study first their perceptions of their mothers' behaviours and values.

By obtaining the views of siblings there was a strong chance that I could check information about their backgrounds. Also if inconsistencies appeared in their accounts of what occurred in their childhood, one could speculate on the reasons. I expected that they would have some difficulties with sourcing memories and was aware that for answering some questions on their mothers' attitudes, the sisters would be relying on their own experiences as well as vague observations of the parents' behaviour with their younger siblings.

For the 1950s couples, the average age of marriage for the female partner was in the early twenties. Numbers in 4 age groups are shown in Table 4. The youngest to marry was 17, and the oldest was 33.

Table 4

Age of Marriage of the 1950s Mothers

Age Group	N
16-19	12
20-24	27
25-29	7
30-34	2
Age not known	2
Total	50

Family Size

First births usually followed closely on the marriage, and others within the next few years. Though the New Zealand Family Planning movement was set up in 1936, contraceptive advice was not freely available till much later. It is likely that the lower birth rate during the depression of the 1930s was due to an increased number of illegal abortions.

The Labour government was determined to raise the standard of living of the population. The state offered family allowances and low rental housing, and subsidised the kindergartens which could relieve mothers of constant childcare. Figure 1 shows the number of children in the 1950s families.

Figure 1

Number of Children in the 1950s Family

12

Fifteen families in the sample had 6 or more children. The 5 which had 12 or more were either Maori or Catholic.

When comparing the above figures of the 1950s family with the size of the 1980s families as shown in Table 5, it should be noted that in some cases the 1980 family is incomplete. At least 4 women were expecting babies at the time of the interviewing.

Table 5

Number of Children in the 1980s Family

No. of Children	No. of Families
1	14
2	38
3	28
4	16
5	3
Missing frequency	1
Total	100

So far none of the modern families has more than 5 children. During the interviews the women talked of the difficulties and particularly the expense of having large families, given the expectations of higher standards of living.

Conditions Surrounding Giving Birth

In the 1950s, apart from those in rural Maori communities and a few rural pakeha families, it was customary for women to have their babies in hospital maternity wards. With the best of intentions - to ensure the good physical care of the mother and infant - the medical staff treated the women as patients, giving anaesthetics for "pain-free" labour. The newborn babies were taken into separate nurseries and were dealt around like cards at regular feeding times. The mother was kept in bed for up to 14 days "to give her a much-needed rest".

After the publication in 1953 of Grantly Dick-Read's book *Childbirth Without Fear*, attitudes towards labour changed, and women were taught to relax to relieve pain and to take more control of the birth. These ideas were developed through the Parents Centre classes initiated by Helen Brew in 1951 in Wellington and later in Christchurch. The 1980s mothers, who have many more options regarding the process of giving birth, recalled only that their mothers disappeared "for a long time" and they themselves were discouraged from asking questions. Hospital visits by older children were then seldom negotiable.

Breast-feeding

Most of the postwar mothers living in cities and towns were visited by Plunket nurses whose advice as noted above was based on the teachings of Sir Truby King. A quotation from my eldest daughter's Plunket book from 1947 reads: "The most loving act a mother can do is to nurse her baby. Nothing can ever replace the milk and heart of a mother".

This was omitted from the 1956 version detailing my youngest child's progress, though breast-feeding was mentioned under: "Food - breast-feeding is the ideal but if baby is artifically fed, hold him in your arms at feeding times".

In the late 1920s Sir Truby King opened a factory at Melrose, Wellington, for manufacturing 2 products - Kariol, a fat emulsion containing vitamin D, and Karilac, a milk-sugar powder mixed in correct proportions to humanise cows' milk. These products improved the effectiveness of bottle-feeding for those who could not or would not breast-feed. Because neither doctors nor maternity staff knew much about how to encourage breast-feeding, the rate of natural feeding went down to a low level in the 1950s. Even in the 1960s James and Jane Ritchie (1970) found that only 15 percent of their total sample of 151 mothers had managed to establish breast-feeding beyond the first few months.

In my schedule I asked "How important did your mother consider breast-feeding?"

Seventy-two percent replied that their perception was that breast-feeding was considered important by their mothers. They were basing their judgments on their memories of seeing their mothers nursing younger siblings or on comments made to them by the grandmothers when the 1980s mothers had their own babies.

Among the 22 percent who said that their mothers seemed to have discounted the importance of breast-feeding, many recalled their mothers mentioning the difficulties of keeping to the Plunket rule of 4-hourly feeds (especially for infants of a few weeks). They had spoken of being intimidated by a strict maternity or Plunket nurse and of feeling that some of the restrictions had the effect of diminishing the milk supply.

Health was given as a reason by some of the postwar mothers for the failure of breast-feeding. Of the fifty 1950s mothers described in the study, 3 had had tuberculosis and had recovered, 1 had had meningitis, and 1 had had a mental breakdown. Some had had complications with premature babies or with twins.

A surprising feature of the breast-feeding efforts of this earlier generation was the amount of embarrassment shown. Here are some quotations about their mothers' experience from the women interviewed:

"She was embarrassed by the whole thing."
"She required privacy."
"Deep down she felt embarrassed."

The sexual overtones of baring a breast even for such a natural function have not changed. As recently as May 1988 there was an incident involving 2 women who were told by a coffee-bar proprietor that he did not want them to breast-feed on his premises. This led to public protests and complaints to the Human Rights Commission. A spate of negative letters also appeared in the newspapers, the mildest of which stated a preference "not to eat where this natural function was taking place", and the strongest referred to "what would happen if a male exposed his sexual organs in a public area!".

Many of the 1950s mothers had shown their pleasure at their daughters' decision to breast-feed. Two women were actively working for the La Leche League. One mother who was interviewed recalled an article in the Parent Centre journal giving credit to a New Zealand agricultural researcher, Dr W. Whittlestone, for work on the let-down reflex during the nursing process. This knowledge enabled her to take a more positive attitude towards breast-feeding.

Spoiling

When asked about "spoiling", several of those interviewed wanted a definition of the term but most gave the popular meaning to the word because it was in their mothers' vocabulary. A hangover from the Victorian era, "spoiling" appeared in the 1947 Plunket book under the heading "Management".

> "Fond and foolish over-indulgence, mismanagement and spoiling may be as harmful to an infant as callous neglect and intentional cruelty."

In the 1956 edition there was no mention of "spoiling" - perhaps the new philosophy of Dr Benjamin Spock had ameliorated the stance among the officers of the Plunket Society. However, James and Jane Ritchie, interviewing New Zealand mothers in 1963 "fully expected to find belief in this doctrine [spoiling] very widespread and indeed we did."

The responses to the question "What was your mother's attitude towards spoiling babies?", showed that 48 percent thought that their mothers took notice of the "harm" involved. Another 48 percent felt that their mothers followed their own inclinations. Many commented that with large families their mothers had no time to spoil their babies. Two percent did not know what their mothers had thought about spoiling.

As examples of "no spoiling" remarks, those interviewed remembered:

"Don't go to babies when they cry."
"We were fed, changed and tucked down firmly."
"Mother is boss."
"You can spoil babies - they cotton on to it."
"She followed the ideas of her time and left us to cry."

Those with contrasting experience said:

"I was spoiled rotten."
"I was a sick baby and had to be spoilt."
"My mother insisted that babies needed lots of cuddles."

In the Maori community the infants were handed around the whanau (extended family) to anyone whose arms were free. One member of a European family of 12 remembers plenty of loving gestures and babies bedded down everywhere in the house. In predominantly Samoan neighbourhoods, doting relatives came in to help the new mother and spoil the newborn child. "Spoiling" here had a positive value.

Occasionally I caught a hint of heightened emotion when discussing this topic, especially with those older sisters who were still aware of being jealous of attention given to younger siblings in childhood. Other respondents were wryly amused by the contradictory messages from the 1950s mothers, now grandparents. Parents should not spoil their children but grandparents can spoil their grandchildren as much as they like!

Toilet-training

Leonora Ritter, writing about changes in Australian childrearing since 1945, says that routine was all important in the immediate postwar years and that a very prescriptive timetable was recommended for the first months of a baby's life. This included holding the baby over the potty in the second week after the birth.

In New Zealand the Plunket book of 1947 stated the needs of the baby as:

> "Regularity of all habits - regularity of feeding... exercise, sleep, etc. Regularity of action of the bowels. Secure at least one motion every day."

The 1956 booklet amended its advice under:

> "Toilet Care: Change the napkins when they are wet or soiled. Most babies who are held out regularly after feeds for 2-3 minutes pass a motion or urine in the chamber. If baby registers disapproval, discontinue holding out in the meantime."

Understandably the women who were interviewed about this aspect of their mothers' practices with children could not answer with great certainty unless they had discussed it recently. Nineteen percent said that they did not know what their mothers' practice was. One said "I haven't had a clue! She has never commented on how I'm training my son".

Some remembered the treatment of younger brothers and sisters. "They always seemed to be sitting on pots!" Another knew that she was trained early and was not allowed a drink after 4.00 p.m., though her father slipped a cup of water one hot night.

Forty-eight percent extrapolated from their mothers' general attitudes and temperament that they were influenced by the Plunket advocacy of holding the infant out at frequent intervals.

Thirty-one percent believed that their mothers did not make an issue out of toilet-training. Some of the 1950s generation would have heard of the ideas in Arnold Gesell's book (1940) explaining about the ages and stages in developmental growth of children, and therefore would have waited for signs of "readiness" at 18 months or more before expecting the child to comply with societal demands for cleanliness.

The present generation of mothers are for the most part more relaxed about this developmental stage in children and indicated that they were aware that boys usually took longer to gain control than girls. But some still felt under pressure from their own mothers and also mothers-in-law to hasten the process.

"My mother chivvies my small daughter" (about using the pot). One woman pointed out that the marketing of disposable napkins brings advantages for parents but also raises concerns about pollution and dangers from chemicals like dioxin.

Baby-minding

"Who minded the children when your parents went out?" was a question which threw up a number of differences between the 2 generations. In the 1950s, babies were not left to be cared for by others. It was the mother's job to look after the children. To be at home for the family was her responsibility. Bowlby's theories about maternal deprivation came into the popular domain in the late 1950s reinforcing this situation (McDonald, 1977).

There were other reasons for women to stay close to home. For the majority money for travelling outside the neighbourhood was scarce and most of their interests were fulfilled nearby. The household supplies could be bought at local shops, and social gatherings tended to be limited to functions connected with church and marae. Entertainment was provided by movie-houses or school concerts. The idea of "dining out" was almost unheard of, except for occasional meals with relatives and friends, festive celebrations, and picnics.

When parents went on visits, it was the custom for children to accompany them. If the mother had to go away from home (usually to have an addition to the family), the father was assisted by immediate family members, grandparents, and neighbours. As one woman said, "in our large family, we minded each other". Table 6 shows who minded the 1950s babies.

Table 6
Who Did the Baby-minding?

Situation	Replies %
Never left with anyone	50
Used other family members	31
Paid baby-sitters	17
Missing frequencies	2
Total	100

Very few references were made to support groups for mothers, one exception being young wives' clubs run by a church. Among the paid baby-sitters were a Karitane nurse trained by Plunket, army cadets (the father was an officer living on an army base), housekeepers paid for by the church, and an elderly neighbour who came in regularly while "Dad went to Lodge and Mum went to Plunket meetings".

Some interesting sidelights on the 1950s mother's role are revealed in these extracts from the interviews:

"Father did not like Mother going out."
"She never left us - father wouldn't approve."
"She lacked confidence and took me with her everywhere."

However, one 1980s woman reported that her parents took turns to attend the local movies and another that her father minded the children while her mother played netball.

The over-riding impression from the data regarding separation from the mother and baby-minding is that usually members of the extended family were available to help out. The 1980s group also call on family members to act as baby-sitters. They have more complicated lives, especially if in part-time work. Some are participating in their children's early childhood education, and some have sporting and social activities which exclude the children.

"Finding suitable childcare is often a major problem", said one mother.

These 1980s mothers keep a balanced view of the children's needs regarding security and separation-anxiety. The battle for parents to stay at the side of their hospitalised children had been won in the main city hospital wards long before the visit of James and Joyce Robertson from the Tavistock Child Development Research Unit in 1974. The 1980s mothers know that most children will bond to other people if the separation is done gradually and with sensitivity.

Mealtimes

The manner in which mealtimes are conducted often reveals a picture of complex family behaviour. In the 1950s not many homes had a television set, so meals were usually taken with all members "sitting up" at the table and the father exerting an authoritarian discipline. The meals were often prepared for a designated hour, 5.30 p.m. being favoured in some working class homes, although in some cases "dinner" with a meat and vegetable course would be set for midday if the father worked close enough to return home.

Three-quarters of the 1950s families sat down together for their main meal. Of the remaining quarter, the majority were served their meal in shifts because the numbers were too great to fit the table or because it suited to feed the younger members first. In 8 percent of the homes, fathers were absent from the meal, either having a job with uncertain hours (such as being a doctor or a travelling salesman), or preferring to patronise the local pub or sometimes having deserted the family.

The women interviewed recalled many battles to do with "eating up everything on your plate". They gave 3 reasons for this fixation by their parents. First, parents were anxious that their offspring should thrive and so the amount of food intake was important to them. Second, discipline was demonstrated in having children obey such instructions. Third, where food was scarce or an expensive commodity, it should not be wasted.

Children were often threatened with "eat up everything or you'll stay there till you do", or "you will get it for breakfast", or "you will get no pudding"! Those interviewed remember developing many strategies to circumvent these terrible fates. One threw her vegetables into the fire. Another gagged over her porridge and had to be excused from eating it. A family of 12 swapped helpings of the food which they disliked around other plates while the parents were not attending. A litany of hate regarding common vegetables was sung, the list including mashed potato, pumpkin, cabbage, swede, turnip, brussels sprouts, broad beans, and cauliflower. Seafoods, tripe, lumpy custard, and rhubarb, sago, rice, and tapioca were mentioned as being "revolting" to some of the women when they were under school age.

Several women attributed their weight problem in adulthood to this demand in childhood to leave a clean plate. It was startling to learn how many of those interviewed confessed that they heard themselves repeating the same injunctions to their children, annoyed that their efforts in the kitchen were unappreciated and worried about the small quantity consumed. Some have learnt to cut down on portions and to ignore passing food fads. They also acknowledge the revolution in meal-making caused by microwave cookery, fast-food snacking, and the availability of a greater range of products, all of which reduce the time and effort for meal preparation but produce other problems.

In 82 percent of the 1950s families, mealtimes were punctuated by calls for good manners, mostly to do with passing the food and keeping one's arms out the way (quaintly described by one woman as "flying to Japan"). Knives and forks were to be properly applied even at the tender age of 4 and keeping the mouth shut while chewing was insisted upon by many fathers, who also enforced the rule about "no talking at the table". A complaint from 4 older sisters highlighted the tendency for parents to ease restrictions with younger siblings.

Examples of interesting cultural differences were given in the interviews. The Chinese family in the 1950s adhered to the tradition of all sitting around a circular table and serving themselves from dishes in the centre. The Samoan sisters were given Pacific Island fare, such as taro and green bananas, which was not always to their liking. Living in a remote back country area, a Maori family with 16 people to feed depended for the most part on what they could grow in the garden and what the eldest brother provided from his fishing and hunting expeditions in the bush.

Helping with Chores

Children of the postwar era were expected to help with household chores, dishwashing in particular. As always, there was much talk of inequity and injustice. "Life isn't fair!" The boys were often excused. Rosters broke down despite token reward systems. The older sisters felt that they bore the brunt of this daily chore while some younger sisters had worked out a dozen ways of "skiving off" - including hiding in the toilet.

Making one's bed and tidying the bedroom were also universally required chores. Friction occurred when the sisters had to share a bedroom and had different standards of tidiness.

While most of the replies about chores mentioned only dishwashing, making beds, and tidying their rooms, 12 of the women interviewed assisted their mothers by cleaning other parts of the house, dusting, waxing floors, shaking rugs, and scrubbing steps. Vacuum cleaners were not very common and 4 women spoke of their suffering from hay fever from lifting and beating dusty carpets when they were young.

The 1950s mothers generally considered that washing clothes and cooking meals were their responsibility, but this changed if the mother took employment outside the home. At least one-quarter of the adolescent girls took charge of the preparation of the evening meal when they were at secondary school.

Some more unusual chores were feeding the pigs, burning the rubbish ("which I loved"), polishing brass taps and silver cutlery, and helping in a market garden. A few girls did extra housework to earn pocket money. The boys, like their fathers, were mainly involved in outdoor activities, such as chopping wood and gardening. They seemed to get preferential treatment in some families. One woman who was interviewed remarked bitterly,

"It's the women's role to look after the males... when we were scrubbing the floor, the boys were allowed to walk over it in muddy boots".

Aunt Daisy's radio programmes advertising various household cleansers were part of the childhood of the 1980s mothers (McGill, 1989). Their mothers as housewives were exhorted to treat dirt and stains with the advertised substances and many of their daughters were caught up in this striving for a standard of cleanliness next to Godliness.

Twenty-six percent of the women interviewed thought that their mothers were fanatical about having a tidy house. This fanaticism took the form of having a place for everything and nagging family members to put away personal belongings immediately on arrival at the house and sometimes demanding that footwear be changed to slippers at the door. One respondent pointed out that because her mother did all the tidying she was ignorant about household maintenance when she went flatting. She intended to see that her adolescent sons and daughters learnt the skills of household management.

Nearly half (46 percent) of the 1950s mothers were described as being "fussy without being perfectionist". Some women who were interviewed went on to explain:

> "She was fussy but she let us help in the kitchen."
> "Rooms had to be kept tidy but we were allowed to make inside play-houses."
> "We weren't 'Home and Garden' - we were comfortable."
> "It was not a flash house. It was in a state area. We had to keep it clean."

Two Maori sisters spoke of an insistence by their mother on daily dusting, floor scrubbing, and washing of windows before going to school.

A small percentage (6 percent) of answers in this context referred to a wish that their homes had been more tidy because they had felt embarrassed about bringing friends in after school. They did realise that their mothers had to make an effort to keep the house functional with the needs of a large family to cater for. These efforts were difficult to sustain and tended to go in spurts, according to the energy levels of the housewife and sometimes pressure from spouses.

One woman described her family's house as a tip. Things were left lying all over the place.

The present generation of mothers saw that having fewer children and more labour-saving devices allowed them more choices about their life style and most of them refuse to model their ideas of a happy home on television advertisements. Several ruefully confided that they are aware from the comments and actions of their mothers when they visit that higher standards are subtly being put forward as an ideal.

Many 1980s mothers feel that their children should contribute to the maintenance of the household, more as a disciplinary exercise and preparation for adult life, rather than as essential labour power. Sons are not discriminated for or against in the sharing of routine jobs around the house as much as they were in the past, though instances of sex-stereotyping are still rife throughout the community.

Chapter 4

PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND VALUES IN THE 1950s

Response to Anger

To gauge one element in the climate of the 1950s household, the question was asked "What did your mother do when you showed anger as a child?" The responses are shown in Table 7.

Table 7
1950s Mothers' Response to Child's Anger

Replies	N
I was hit	11
I was sent to my room	53
I was ignored	35
Missing frequency	1
Total	100

In some instances where the girls were hit, it was the father who did the hitting. Five women spoke of the violence of their alcoholic fathers and of the even more severe treatment received by their brothers. These incidents often occurred in the larger families where the budget was tight and the mother overwhelmed by the constant struggle to keep the peace. Sometimes there were great shouting matches. One mother was described as having "red hair and a temper to go with it".

The most common reaction to family bickering was to separate the warring parties by sending one of them to her room. In fact 3 women said that they went to their bedrooms of their own volition to sulk. One acknowledged "I was a wimp".

Whereas these women assessed their parents' physical intervention and intolerance negatively, their most damning judgments were reserved for the category of "ignoring". Showing anger was unacceptable to many of their parents' generation, so one way they chose to cope with their strong feelings was to ignore them.

The women interviewed gave some examples of how their emotions were trivialised:
"Now, now, calm down!"
"Look in the mirror and see your funny face."
"She's going through a stage." The speaker added, "This I will never say to my children!"

The message, "Don't be angry" still affects some of the 1980s mothers. I was told that it took 1 woman 10 years to recognise the source of her residual unexpressed anger. Another has become aware that she automatically suppresses her angry reactions and senses the same behaviour in her husband. She is determined to change the familiar pattern by meeting her daughters' emotional needs and keeping the communication channels open. "I was never encouraged to give a reason for my anger and that's why I try harder to show understanding with my children."

In replying to this question, the women who were interviewed made many insightful remarks about their own personal development within the family context. Some recognised their jealousy of older and younger siblings. One kicked a quiet mother "to get attention" and threw "wobblies" to spite her brothers. Another's extreme fits of temper turned out later to be symptomatic of a prediabetic condition.

Many recalled the feelings of injustice from not knowing what transgressions they were being punished for. "It's not fair!", was often heard.

Two Maori sisters described the feelings of pent-up anger provoked by being under the control of the whanau (extended family) where everyone, particularly the males, had the right to order them about.

At least 1 in 10 in the sample as young girls being brought up in the 1950s identified with their mothers' model of conforming behaviour and keeping out of the father's way. It was more likely for the eldest daughter to start out being the most conforming, so much so that 1 was said to be the least loved in a family of 7 and another was made the family scapegoat up to adulthood. From some of the interview data came confirmation of the statement in Smart and Smart (1977). "First-born girls are encouraged and approved by mothers when they take physical care of siblings and act as parent-surrogates. They have little need to develop strategic ways of coping with siblings and often feel isolated."

Methods of Discipline

The results for the question on the methods of home discipline are shown in Table 8.

Table 8
Methods of Discipline

Method	N
Hitting	36
Threats and being sent to room	31
Deprived of treats	16
Others (use of reason, appeals to guilt)	16
Total	99

Severe hidings with leather straps were childhood memories of 2 women who were bitter about the petty nature of the "crime". One woman complained of being strapped at the age of 3 for "pinching" sweets and another pair of sisters "belted for being 'wawa' kids clinging to Mum at the marae meeting".

The straps, wooden spoons, or yardsticks used for correction were often located at the father's set place at the table or hidden under a cushion in the living room. Some items of chastisement met unusual fates - a red plastic belt was thrown by a child into a high hedge to be found years later when the hedge was dug up. In another incident, brothers cut up the offending strap and threw it away. Both sets of sisters recalled these happenings without any reference to each other so they must have been impressed by them.

One woman was smacked at the age of 18 when she returned late from a dance. However, many women agreed that the boys in the family received more and fiercer corporal punishment than the girls. Four fathers found the responsibility for disciplining a host of children too great and "took off".

An interesting revelation was passed on to me by 1 young mother who was on the receiving end of much physical punishment as a child. She had heard on a radio talk-back programme that "You don't have to hit your child to make her obey - there are other ways of disciplining". Her first child was then only 15 months old but the mother was glad of this information in view of the resentment raised by her own childhood experiences.

Being sent to one's room or being given "time-out", as it is now called, was not as effective in the days of large families since there was less opportunity to remain isolated in a shared bedroom. Some children were sent outside for tempers to cool down.

Again the postwar family had few resources to call on when it came to withdrawing treats as a means of control. Favourite radio programmes could be banned but as not many New Zealand homes had television sets at this time, the forbidding of TV viewing was not an option.

Then as in today's world most mothers shouted at the children, especially at the end of the day when they were preparing meals. One pair of sisters remembered a great amount of shouting at home and realised now that their mother was under tremendous strain, having had 6 children in 9 years and a husband who neither helped in the house nor backed her efforts at discipline.

Among the other forms of discipline given were the use of guilt and an appeal to the need to please - the beginnings of female conditioning (Gilligan, 1982).

"We were expected to act right", was a statement given in explanation. The worst punishment for some girls was having to tell their father about the wrongdoing when he came home. The father's deep voice was to his advantage in setting sanctions, though in some families the parents played off each other, refusing to take a stand for fear of losing the love and respect of the children.

Very little was said about discipline which depends on rewards and praise to provide a positive family climate. To the contrary, 10 of those interviewed felt continually criticised and rejected. One commented bitterly on the lack of cuddles or physical contact from her mother or father - "The boys sat on Dad's knee and I badly wanted to". She had also missed out on "mothering" in her first year in babyhood because her mother had been ill in hospital.

How Important Was Education to Your Parents?

School attendance was considered important in 93 percent of the families. Many of the 1950s parents were aware of the lack of educational opportunity in their own youth and were determined that their children should get sufficient secondary education to get good jobs. In poorer and larger families, some of the daughters were required to leave school early to seek employment to augment the family income or to mind the younger children. However, some left early for their own personal reasons. One woman was pleased that she did stay long enough to gain University Entrance, because later in life she achieved sufficient qualifications to become a tutor at a polytechnic.

If the father had academic qualifications, the expectations were high that the daughters would continue on to tertiary studies. Two 1950s mothers who had missed out on tertiary education pushed their daughters through university, though the recipients were unimpressed by the benefits of this undertaking.

The women revealed in the interviews their own attitudes to school. These ranged from "loving it" or "hating it" to 1 who was a bright pupil in a small country school - "I felt capable but not confident". The tendency towards being a conforming female child comes through in the following quotes:

"I was a goody-goody."
"I was never naughty at school."
"I was very conscientious about school."

One woman said she liked going to school as it took her out of the orbit of her mother who was mentally unbalanced. On the other hand one 1950s child admitted to truanting a lot. She had found a good playmate - she did not specify who this was.

A few missed up to a year of schooling due to various illnesses, mainly asthma, meningitis, bronchitis set off by seasonal pollens, and a bad bout of boils. As 2 pairs of sisters had fathers who were doctors, they had little chance of "pulling a sickie". Many women remarked that they had to be genuinely in poor health to be allowed to stay home. The children in 2 Maori families living in an isolated area were often tired from early morning chores and the long bus ride to the nearest school, so their attendance record was erratic.

Eighty-five percent of the 1950s parents made sure homework had a high priority over play activities after school. The home rules often required homework to be completed before the evening meal or before going off to sport. I was given lively word-pictures of 3 or more family members sitting around the kitchen table applying themselves to spelling lists, mental tables, and "projects" while the radio was blaring out the latest "pop" tunes.

"Homework was a nightmare - Auntie was so impatient!" said 1 Maori woman.

Whereas some parents were able to assist with the basic school subjects, others did not have enough education themselves to do anything but check that the work was done. Ten older sisters said that they took on this function when mothers were too busy or tired to help.

Attitudes Towards Children's Play Activities

"This is the last era (1950s) before television could peddle global junk games designed by adults for profit... These were the last heydays of child-created games." David McGill (1989) drew this conclusion in his book, *Kiwi Baby Boomers: Growing Up in New Zealand in the 40's, 50's and 60's.*

There was plenty of evidence of child-created games in the interview material where the advantage of having brothers and sisters to play with was quite obvious. No need for imaginary playmates!

On the whole the attitudes of the 1950s parents was one of laissez faire. The most common injunction was "Go outside and play". The assumption was that there would be other children to play with either in the backyard or on the street. Street games were popular. They took the form of ball games or variations of chasing or tag games with interesting names such as: running-through, bullrush, brandy, twopenny runs, kingpin, bar-the-door, longstop, and one called "truth, dare, command, promise". Sutton-Smith (1959) recognised most of these and is intending to check their continuity into the play of the present day (personal communication).

Some of the women who were interviewed spoke of cricket being played out on the street after tea in the summer and occasionally fathers joining in to the enhanced pleasure of the children. One father's participation was in so much demand that the neighbourhood children would knock on the door and ask if he could come out and play!

The 31 women who recalled being involved in these street games thought of themselves as "tomboys" but the remainder of the interviewees insisted that they were not outdoor people, in defence blaming poor hand-eye co-ordination, indifferent health, or family circumstances such as being needed to help in the house.

Many recalled "dress-ups" as the favourite component of playing "house" and "schools". Other themes were played out - weddings, cowboys and Indians, and early pioneers. Space-mania did not appear till after the first moon-walk in 1969. The construction of dens, forts, and hidey-holes featured widely in the leisure-time activities of some of the sisters, who enthused about their special childhood wilderness with its trees, bracken, or sandhills. The chance to swing on vines in the bush was seen as a treat, as was being allowed to fish for crawlies in streams or cockabullies in coastal pools. Some 1950s parents were remembered for arranging outings and picnics at nearby parks and reserves but many were limited by not owning a car.

Trolleys and bikes were an important part of childhood in the 1950s and when family budgets did not run to new models, prized spare parts could often be scavenged from local rubbish tips.

"We had to play with what we could make ourselves." The more expensive toys would be bought as birthday or Christmas presents. These would include hula-hoops, skates, and dolls. Thirty women listed dolls as their favourite playthings. One was passionately fond of her Cindy doll, the forerunner of the Barbie doll. The 1950s girls amused themselves by sewing clothes for the dolls and used them as accessories in fantasy play about being grown-up. Could this be seen as rehearsal for the adult role of motherhood?

Indoor occupations were headed by reading, though neither the schools nor the juvenile sections of public libraries were well stocked in the 1950s. There were so few books for children being published. Listening to the radio and playing cards and board games were major forms of entertainment for the older children. The younger children were sometimes allowed to build tents with blankets round the dining room furniture. Some children with permissive mothers were allowed to flip on the sofa!

Pets were seen as an important part of growing up in some families. Horses were owned by 6 adolescent girls, 2 of whom lived in the city and so had to travel to where their horses were grazing each weekend. Several country sisters cared for pet lambs and one recalled that she was the proud owner of a pet hedgehog!

I formed the impression that the mothers' attitude towards their children's play had influenced the lives of the 1980s generation, sometimes positively, sometimes negatively.

"We were not allowed to ask children in to play", said 1 woman sadly.

Attitudes Towards Working Mothers

The pervasive attitude to "working mothers" in the immediate postwar years was expressed in 1 daughter's words, "My mother treated working mothers with disdain".

Women who worked were looked on as odd or at least untrustworthy. The mother's place was in the home and the size of the family conspired to keep her there. For some women, it seemed safer to stay in the domestic role than to find the confidence to re-enter the job market, especially as two-thirds of the 1950s mothers had had no secondary education or less than 2 years at a high school. Above this lack of confidence was the general feeling that if one were working outside the home, the children were being neglected. One 1950s mother was described as working "secretly" while the children were at school. Table 9 shows the attitudes held towards working mothers.

Table 9

Attitudes of 1950s Mothers to "Working Mothers" as Perceived by Their Daughters

Attitude	N
For	37
Against	12
Total	49

Despite the current beliefs of some 1950s mothers and prohibitions by some fathers, the women interviewed thought that three-quarters of their mothers either sanctioned employment outside the home or had taken jobs themselves at some time after the children had started school.

Three mothers in this 1950s cohort had combined motherhood with professional careers. One was a teacher, 1 a musician, and the other an architectural draughtsperson. Some who had professional training preferred staying in the housewife role and using their talents in voluntary organisations.

The 1950s mothers who worked included women whose spouses were ill, unemployed, or alcoholic, as well as some who sought a few luxuries for their family. One was deemed a compulsive worker - "She was always into schemes for making money - running motels, taking orders for knitting and so on". Others did seasonal picking in orchards, dressmaking, or assisting in local shops. Those living in rural areas had limited opportunity for paid employment.

For some 1950s mothers having a job outside the home was never an issue. They sustained the homemaker role with interests well catered for in the women's magazines of the period. They preserved fruit and vegetables, produced a variety of toothsome cakes and biscuits to fill the tins, offered the required "plate" on social occasions, and sewed and knitted for all the young family members.

James and Jane Ritchie noted that in 1970 the convergence between male and female roles within the family was not particularly marked in New Zealand society. The postwar mothers did not complain about the lack of help from their spouses; most did not expect it.

In the 1980s for various reasons mainly to do with the downturn in the economy, many mothers had to contribute to the family income to maintain a comfortable standard of living. They were able to join the labour force because of several factors not present in their own mothers' lives. They have fewer children, and generally a higher level of educational attainment than their mothers. More of their spouses regard themselves as partners in terms of childcare, shopping, and house maintenance than the previous generation.

The primary responsibility for running the household and looking after the children remains with the women. Although men are spending more time with their children, they are spending only slightly more time on housework. These are the conclusions of Rosemary

Novitz, quoted in Phillips, *A Man's Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male, A History.* (1987).

Forty-four women in the sample are staying home with young children, though their expectations of returning to work in an outside job remain high. In fact, 15 of the women interviewed are taking adult education courses with a view to upgrading their career opportunities. This includes 1 mature entrant to teacher training with 4 children from 5 to 14 years of age. Four others are finishing university degrees, 2 through extramural study. Two are improving their accountancy qualifications by correspondence.

However, feminist hopes for equity at work and home are slow in being fulfilled. According to Faith Robertson Elliott (1986), there are 3 ways by which women are being relegated to a position which is low paid, low in status, and related to cultural concepts of femininity. The first way is through the disruption of working history if time is taken to rear children; the second is that work compatible with family life is part time and low paid; the third is that available occupations are mostly involved with caring for others.

Attitudes Towards Sexuality

Sixty-seven of the women interviewed were clear about messages concerning nudity in their upbringing - "keep your clothes on"! In the 1950s an overlay of Victorian prudishness meant taboos about being allowed to see the parents undressed. Daughters were seldom permitted to see their father's naked body. In large families training for modesty seemed inevitable, and some households had boarders to contend with as well when sharing bathroom facilities.

The other third of the women interviewed thought the family attitude towards nudity remained casual till pubertal changes seemed to necessitate some covering up. How the women learnt about such changes is shown in Table 10.

Table 10

How Did You Learn About Menstruation?

Informant	N
Mother	55
Other (sister, friends, etc.)	38
Books	6
Total	99

While just over half the replies to this question named the mother as having been the main informant about menstruation, many were not warned prior to the onset and suffered trauma until they accepted that it was a normal part of growing up.

One woman said "I thought I was dying"! Another recalled "I got my first period during the tennis championships and didn't know what was happening to me". "I remember the exact place where Mum told me - in a car just as we were going over the main bridge

into town", said another. Many of the 1950s mothers were reported as being embarrassed by the subject of sex. They found it difficult to find suitable times and places for intimate talks with their daughters and then were unsure about how to go about explanations of sex matters.

In the 1960s the Health Department had made a worthwhile effort in producing a set of 3 sex education booklets for adolescents. These were available to parents through the schools. At this time the intermediate and secondary schools were beginning to hold mother and daughter film evenings. Some of these films were effective in opening discussions on aspects of sexual intercourse which the pupils might have found puzzling. But for some of the women in the sample this clarification would have come too late - at least 5 of them had been sexually abused by relatives or "friends" of the family.

Each woman interviewed was asked if the information given about menstruation made the connection between the maturing female body and the possibility of becoming a mother. Very few reported that this association had been made, though 1 woman remembered a disjointed lecture about "not fooling around with boys".

The books cited by the women interviewed as providing information about sex included the Health Department pamphlets, *Playboy* magazine, and a church-based publication, *Approaching Womanhood*. Not much literature on sex development was available during the childhood of these women, but 1 of the 1950s mothers produced a religious booklet with advice about how to behave with the opposite sex, bringing it out of her apron pocket as her daughter left home for boarding school at 13.

I was surprised by the small percentage who made their sisters their usual confidante in sexual matters. One pair of identical twins said that they had not discussed their knowledge about sex with each other. Even in the large families there was no guarantee that information would filter down to the younger siblings.

One young woman did not confide in her sister or parents about an episode whereby her sex education was advanced at the age of 7. On the way home from school she and 3 other little playmates were enticed into a shed by an old man who offered them sweets. He insisted that they watch him while he masturbated. They were intrigued rather than horrified and did not tell their parents even though the incident was repeated in the following week.

Two of the 1950s fathers who had sole charge of their children because of their wives' ill health managed to give daughters timely explanations about the development of the female body.

Two women remarked to me during discussion of this topic that our society could improve on its understanding of the adolescents' need for rites of passage into adulthood. They liked the suggestion by 1 of the 1980s mothers that she gave her daughter a marcasite ring to mark the occasion of her first menses.

Attitudes Towards Homosexuality

In the past generations, homosexuality was seldom discussed in the family circle. In fact the term "homosexuality" was never heard by the women interviewed when they were children, only a reference to "queers" and "poofters".

Where some religions were concerned, the teacher was unequivocal - homosexual relationships were unnatural, sinful, and completely wrong. People were enjoined to be more self-controlled.

Table 11 shows how 1980s mothers perceived their mothers' attitudes towards homosexuality.

Table 11
1980s Mothers' Perceptions of Their Mothers' Attitudes Towards Homosexuality

Attitude	N
Tolerant	23
Intolerant	15
Don't know	12
Total	50

More tolerance was shown if there were homosexual relatives or friends close to the 1950s family. Ten percent of the sample reported knowing of such examples.

"Mother was sympathetic to a lesbian cousin and thought her neither evil or wicked."
"My father met my brother's homosexual flatmates at dinner and accepted them."

One family knew that 2 of their boarders were homosexual but were not bothered about this. Two of the 1980s mothers thought their mothers had had lesbian relationships before marriage. One of the women interviewed spoke of a bisexual uncle who dressed as a female and a transvestite relative as being accepted in the Polynesian family context with greater equanimity than in pakeha families.

There was 1 sad case of a 1950s father who had married and had 4 children though he had been in homosexual relationships over the previous 15 years. To conquer his identity problem he began drinking alcohol to excess and when his male lover moved to Australia suffered a brain haemorrhage and died at the early age of 42 - "of a broken heart", said his daughter.

Racism

Over recent years New Zealanders have become aware that our race relations record is far from perfect and many people feel that it has deteriorated since World War 2. To the question "What was the attitude of your mother towards people of other races?", three-quarters of the 1980s women said that they believed their mothers were not prejudiced, but further probing revealed some ambivalence. One woman described her 1950s mother as being extremely patronising towards the Maori families who lived near their farm. Sixteen thought their fathers were particularly racist, the outwards signs being crude jokes about and constant stereotyping of all "coloured" races.

It was interesting to record a few responses from the past about "Maoris should fit

in". The 6 pairs of sisters of Maori ancestry in the sample were clear that there was no prejudice against pakeha in their families. Samoan immigrants found little bigotry in the Catholic church of which they were members.

When it came to cross-cultural marriage, that was a different story! Then some of the women interviewed recalled getting a hostile reception from their families when they brought home boyfriends of a different race. They were given such advice as:

> "Don't get any ideas about beautiful brown-eyed babies!"
> and
> "Keep to your own kind."

The New Zealand-born Chinese sisters who had been the target of racist name-calling at primary school, did just that - they married New Zealand-born Chinese men.

Chapter 5

CHILDREARING VALUES: MOTHERS' RESPONSES TO A TAPE ON DISCIPLINE

Audio Tape Sessions

As a means of finding out more about mothers' ideas on childrearing, I chose a method described in *Childrearing Values: A Cross-National Study* by Lambert, Hamers, and Frasure-Smith (1979). The technique was based on work by Rothbart and Maccoby (1966). Mothers are asked to listen to an audio tape on which the voice of a 6-year-old child asks questions and seeks attention, help, or comfort, or becomes angry, insolent, or aggressive towards the mother, a younger sibling, or same-aged friend. After each recorded item, the tape recorder is stopped to enable the mother to react as if she were the mother of the child on the tape. The mother's responses are recorded on another audio tape recorder.

I explained to the person I was interviewing that she should imagine that a 6-year-old is sitting on the floor by its mother. The mother is relaxed and responding to the child's conversation. After testing that the recorders were both working, I played the child's voice making an initial appeal "Look Mummy" and recorded the subject's response. The taping episode took about 4 or 5 minutes and was administered about two-thirds of the way through the schedule of questions.

The majority of the interviewees undertook this unusual task with good humour, although many were tentative about their ability to do it "right". They were reassured by my declaring there was no "right" way and that their answers would have the utmost confidentiality. Only 1 of the women interviewed gave up on the whole section, her reason being that her first child was a young baby so she could not imagine what she would say under these circumstances to a 6-year-old. Also missing is a report from a sister who refused to be interviewed.

The women's ability to place themselves in the role situation varied enormously. Some became so thoroughly involved that they became quite emotional over the child's insolence and aggressive talk, whereas others called on new parent training to "solve the problem" intellectually.

There were 17 separate items in the series passing from requests for help, to concern about the baby's entrance into the scene, to frustration with the puzzle and expressions of cheekiness. This was followed by more complaints about the baby and a demand to cross the street to play and then another sequence about play with a friend.

Situation: A 6-year-old child (no gender specified) is playing on the floor with a jigsaw puzzle while the mother is sitting nearby. The child addresses some remarks to the

mother, some to a baby, and some to a visiting child.

Stimulus statements from the tape (the tape was stopped after each numbered statement):

1. Mummy, come look at my puzzle.
2. Mummy, help me.
3. Does this piece go here?
4. Baby, you can't play with me - you're too little.
5. You can't play with my puzzle. It's mine.
6. Leave my puzzle alone or I'll hit you on the head!
7. I don't like this game. I'm going to break it!
8. I don't like this game. It's a stupid game and you're a stupid Mummy!
9. Ow! Baby stepped on my hand.
10. Mummy, it hurts.
11. Mummy, get me another puzzle.
12. It's not raining now. Can I go across the street and play?
13. Why can't I? I'm going to, anyway!
14. Can Chris come and play?
15. Chris, let me put the pieces in myself. You watch me.
16. Don't touch the pieces. You don't know how to do it.
17. If you don't leave them alone, I'll beat you up!

Each item was designed to elicit an attitude to a specific situation, not to be an indication of childrearing practices in general. Scoring was predicated on Western European values. Two judges independently coded the responses. These were combined into scales devised by the Canadian researchers. Any disagreements between the coders were resolved by discussion.

The responses were later combined into 10 scales and given descriptive titles.

1.	Help withholding	(Questions 1,2,3, and 11)
2.	Comfort withholding	(9 and 10)
3.	Temper control	(7)
4.	Insolence control	(8 and 13)
5.	Siding with baby *v.* child	(4,5, and 6)
6.	Attention denial	(9)
7.	Automony control	(12)
8.	Guest restrictions	(14)
9.	Siding with guest *v.* child	(15,16, and 17)
10.	Social temper control	(6 and 17)

A score was calculated. Since higher scores on these scales are indicative of more punitive or more restrictive practices, the names assigned to the scales refer to the least restrictive end; thus it is a "help giving" scale. (*See* Appendix 2 for individual results.)

Results

The results of the mothers' responses to the audio tape sessions are recorded in Table 12.

Table 12

Number of *Mothers With Responses Rated From Permissive to Restrictive on the 17 Items From Lambert* et al.

Stimulus statements (abbreviated)	Permissive --- Restrictive 1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Look Mummy	89	7	2	-	-	-
2. Help me	75	9	12	2	-	-
3. Does this piece go here?	51	41	1	5	-	-
4. No! Baby	48	28	1	21	-	-
5. It's mine	39	32	1	18	8	-
6. I'll hit you	8	28	6	51	5	-
7. I'll break it	13	46	26	10	3	-
8. You're stupid Mummy	32	14	16	30	1	5
9. Baby stepped on my hand	62	1	2	11	19	3
10. It hurts	59	13	6	12	3	5
11. Get me another puzzle	16	21	14	40	6	1
12. Cross the street	11	20	32	21	8	6
13. I'm going to anyway	3	62	17	12	4	-
14. Can Chris come?	28	52	12	6	-	-
15. You watch me	8	39	26	24	1	-
16. Don't touch the pieces	2	9	11	69	6	1
17. I'll beat you up	3	20	20	42	12	1

Note: N = 98

General Comments

Scale 1: Help Withholding (Questions 1,2,3, and 11)

The first statement was "Mummy, come look at my puzzle". When the mothers heard this request for help, they responded with simple words like "yes" and "O.K.". Because this was a novel situation for the women interviewed, the results may have been affected by a desire to please the interviewer. Nevertheless, the high rate of "permissive" responses suggests that these mothers were warmer in their response to the child's voice than the English-speaking Canadians in the Lambert *et al.* (1979) study. However, it must be pointed out that over 10 years have elapsed since the Canadian research was done, and their sample of 40 middle class parents and 40 with working class backgrounds was different from mine.

While 79 of the mothers responded with an answer expressing some kind of immediate help in the recorded situation, some (9) offered only partial help, and 12 tried delaying tactics, 2 brushing off the child with "try yourself".

In reply to the question "Does this piece go here?", half of the mothers responded positively and another 41 were willing to give partial help by suggesting simple strategies, for example - "Have you looked at all the pieces?", "Does it fit?", and "Turn it around". One mother indicated that she would not assist immediately by saying "Wait till I finish this row of knitting".

The last demand in the *Help Withholding* section was "Mummy, get me another puzzle", said on the tape in a flat, not whingeing, tone. However, it did sound demanding to the majority of the listeners to the tape, who perhaps expecting a greater measure of independence from a 6-year-old, said "Get it yourself!". Ten mothers asked for a "please", or the "magic word".

Scale 2: Comfort Withholding (Questions 9 and 10)

When the imaginary baby stepped on the hand of the imaginary sibling, about two-thirds of the mothers responding to the tape made sympathetic noises - for example "Show me" and "I'll kiss it better". Others manifested only mild interest and the rest tended to excuse the baby by saying "She didn't mean it", "Why didn't you move your hand?", or "She's only little".

The participating mothers expressed great concern when they heard "Mummy, it hurts!" and tried to soothe the pain. However, some (26) remained neutral or took the side of the baby, saying "He couldn't have hurt you. Don't be silly".

Scale 3: Temper Control (Question 7)

Lambert *et al.* comment that when a child displays temper, there is a universally strong social class difference in parent reactions in all 10 national settings which they studied. Working class parents responded more harshly than middle class parents. More than half of the mothers in this study when faced with the outburst "I don't like this game - I'm going to break it", tended to ignore the threat of the destruction of the plaything and tried to divert the child into other activities. Some mothers began to demonstrate that they had learnt of ways of accepting children's angry feelings and had developed techniques for dealing with them - "It makes you feel angry" and "How come you feel like this?"

When there was scolding, it was mild - "No need to break it" and "Cut that out".

The harsher reactions took the form of threats implying a loss of parental attention and punishments such as isolation in one's room.

The phrase "I'll beat you up!" would have been familiar to TV addicts and the mothers did not regard this as untoward, except to say:

"That's enough of that kind of talk."

"You'd better behave!"

"You won't beat anyone up."

Those who did not see this behaviour as typical of their child, saw a need to protect the guest and offered alternative solutions to both children. Some spoke directly to Chris, "Come with me and we'll find something for you".

Scale 4: Insolence Control (Questions 8 and 13)

While some mothers were surprised by being called "stupid" by a young child, the majority gave a little laugh of recognition at such behaviour and either ignored the slur or diverted attention to something else. Those trained in positive parenting methods asked "What about the game makes you feel like this?" or "Have you finished playing with it?" A third of the mothers thought the statement called for reprimand along the lines of "Don't be nasty" or "I don't like the way you're talking. That's not nice!"

When punishment was mentioned, it was expressed as taking the game away or sending the child to the bedroom. One mother lately settled out of a women's refuge said that she would have resorted to a slap.

When it came to flouting the mother's edict about going across the road to play ("Why can't I? I'm going to anyway!"), the response to this example of disobedience was a repetition of their previous reply to insolence. A small number (12) were visibly shaken by this attack on their authority. One mother spoke in a high cross tone - "No, you're not. Do as you are told!"

Another warned, "Try going across that road and see what happens!"

Scale 5: Siding with Baby v. *Child (Questions 4,5, and 6)*

Where there is a young sibling in the family, the mother's time is competed for and the older child's activities endangered. In this role-play, the mother is asked how she would cope when the baby looks as if he/she will interfere with the older child's game.

"I would do something with the baby", offered over three-quarters of the mothers, preparing to stop their own activities. Another substantial group made suggestions on how to circumvent the baby's efforts.

"Put your puzzle on the table."

"Give the baby one piece to play with."

"Let her watch."

On hearing the second statement in this series, "You can't play with my puzzle. It's mine.", 71 mothers still sided with the child. Putting a greater emphasis on sharing, they asked the older child to make some adjustments.

Even at the point when the child threatened to hit the baby on the head, the response of 42 mothers was on the basis of expecting the child to be patient and share. Fifty-one were moved to show disapproval and reprimand the child.

Scale 6: Attention Denial (Question 9)

On hearing that the baby had stepped on the child's hand, the New Zealand sample showed a more sympathetic response than the Canadian mothers. About two-thirds of them said immediately "Show me" or "I'll kiss it better". Others were only slightly interested while the remainder tended to excuse the baby with cries of:

"She didn't mean it."

"She's only little."

"Why didn't you move your hand?"

Scale 7: Automony Control (Question 12)

A request for permission to cross the road to play raised some aspects of modern living that

restrict children's automony, even at age 6 after a year's attendance at school. Geographical distances affected some replies. For example, for those living in rural areas where neighbours could be a kilometre or more apart or for those in hilly suburbs in which ridges and gullies divided the houses, crossing the road to play is not practicable. This partly accounts for the low number of mothers (11) who indicated that they would accede to the child's request.

Mostly permission was given with a number of provisos such as "You'll have to wait till I'm ready to take you across". The density of traffic has thickened (New Zealand has the third highest number of vehicles per head of population in the world and fewer roads to drive on), and the speed is frightening so mothers have good reason to assess traffic hazards realistically.

Another constraint was a social one. An exchange of phone calls was required to see if the neighbour was in and then if it was convenient for the child to visit. This would appear to reflect on some of the complexities of modern living - family privacy must not be invaded without warning. As a contrast, some of the mothers interviewed spoke of the agony in their childhood of not being able to bring friends home to play because of the poverty of the household or the unkemptness of the surroundings.

Another danger in the child's going out alone was not far from the minds of the mothers - possibility of kidnapping and sexual violation, since in several areas where I was carrying out interviews unfortunate incidents had occurred in the recent past.

I received the impression that these 1980s mothers, despite having fewer children than the previous generation, had very busy life styles, combining childcare with chauffeuring, entertaining, and a part-time job. They were careful about how spare hours were expended and with whom.

Scale 8: Guest Restrictions (Question 14)

In the role-play more mothers agreed without hesitation to have Chris come over to play. They were happy to have the play situation under their control. Another large group consented but with the reservation that Chris's mother be rung first. A few refused without explanation or gave "good" reasons for refusing such as "It's too near to dinner time".

One mother said honestly, "It would depend on my mood".

Comparing The Scores of Older and Younger Sisters

Because I was interested in finding out whether being brought up by the same mother in the 1950s would lead these sisters to the same disciplinary values (though not necessarily following the ideas of their mother), I was able to compare the number of cases where the older sister's score varied from the younger sister's and measure in which direction they differed (*see* Table 19 in Appendix 2).

When comparing the response of the matched pairs of sisters, the disparities between lenience and harshness range evenly along the continuum. If adherence to a family tradition of discipline were passed on from generation to generation, the scores should be closer together. The figures show that many more variables must be considered (such variables might include temperament).

Two of the closest scores were recorded by sisters in a family of 7 children whose mother was a New Zealand-born Italian, characterised by her daughters as having a lively,

caring temperament. Another common element in close scores appeared to be having a "playful" father, one who enjoyed taking part in family games after work.

In a case where there was a wide difference in scores, the elder of the 2 sisters being inflexible on most counts, their ages were 12 years apart, they were the only 2 children in the family, and their mother had a history of mental breakdown.

Another example of an unusually wide spread of scores was shown by a pair of sisters in a working class family where the eldest daughter was given a great deal of responsibility to uphold "respectable" standards in a home economically stretched, whereas the youngest of 6 rebelled and used a laissez faire style of discipline with her children.

Older and Younger Sisters as a Group

Older sisters as a group compared with younger sisters as a group showed no significant differences in their average scores (*see* Table 20 in Appendix 2).

The figures for Scale 8 (Guest Restriction) show the greatest discrepancy between sisters.

Table 21 (*see* Appendix 2) shows that this trend was significant for matched pairs of sisters when the analyses were restricted to older sisters aged 33 or over and to younger sisters aged 32 or under.

In the individual families the matched pairs of sisters showed no significant differences on any of the scales, but the range of variation was wider among the younger sisters, possibly reflecting the availability of a wider range of social standards in recent years.

Case Studies of Identical Twins

One set of identical twins came first in the birth order while the other 2 sets in the sample were the middle children in families of 5 and 12 respectively. Their education and training took parallel lines. Set A both completed university degrees and took up employment in the public service before marriage. Set B trained as nurses and at the moment work at local hospitals part time. Set C also took degrees at university and then taught at secondary schools. They fit in occasional relieving jobs with caring for their children. Four of these 6 women have been playcentre members.

When asked if they had been following their mothers' ideas, they all maintained that they "heard" their mothers' voices in their heads and carried on the same values as their mothers but felt that they were more aware of the effect of their own actions on the children's self-esteem than the previous generation was. They put emphasis on encouraging independence and responsibility in their children. It seems that they believed that they were affected by being treated as a unit, being dressed the same and being led into similar careers. They attributed some of their slight differences in disciplinary style to their having married men with different ideas about childrearing.

Summing Up

Under a chapter headed "Sanctions", Jane and James Ritchie (1970) say of the 1950s mothers "their systems of rewards, of punishment and quietly overlooking what they disapproved of or wished to ignore... constitute the core of child training".

Lambert *et al.* note that Canadian working class parents in the 1970s were more inclined to use threats of punishment or punishment techniques while middle class parents were more inclined to use psychological and reasoning approaches to discipline, making them more lenient and soft - in other words less punitive.

Alison Clarke-Stewart (1988) believes that mothers' reactions in hypothetical disciplinary situations are based on the child's specific misbehaviour rather than on global policies on discipline. We cannot make simple generalisations about one-sided effects of the mother's discipline on children's development. We need to take inborn characteristics of individual children into account in order to understand the processes involved in the mother's effects on development.

More of the 1980s mothers in this sample use reasoning, "time-out", contracts, and "planned ignoring" than their 1950s mothers. These methods of discipline are advocated by Kate Birch in her book *Positive Parenting* and given wide coverage in adult education classes in parents centres, playcentres, and marriage guidance centres.

A strong emphasis on "sharing" both with the baby and the invited playmate reveals that, in the home, training for co-operation conflicts with the competitive stance required in the outside world. The co-operative philosophy of childrearing is endorsed in most "advice" books, including *Understanding Children* (Morris, 1983).

In general the taped voices of the women interviewed in response to their imaginary offspring seemed to convey a warm relationship, even when the spoken words were abrupt and negative. Their self-esteem was unruffled by the cheekiness and name-calling on the tape. When their own preschoolers were present during the taping session, they mostly reacted with amusement at being called stupid and did not show embarrassment.

Chapter 6

ARE YOU FOLLOWING YOUR MOTHER'S IDEAS?

Changing Times

Since the time in which the sisters were brought up, many ideas about the accepted importance of habit, tradition, and custom have been challenged and changes to human behaviour sanctioned. The trends of change have no simple causation but the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s, followed by World War 2 and the social upheaval that followed, contributed to some extent.

The fact that improved communications by means of the mass media had turned the world into a "global village", in McLuhan's phrase, exposed different forms of human behaviour in a wide range of cultures and nationalities. The race to conquer space as a new frontier caused some Western nations to examine more closely the potential of their intellectual resources and the parent contribution to the early nurture of children. This threw a spotlight on the influence of mothers on their children's upbringing and in the United States at least led to pressure on parents and teachers to try to accelerate the education and development of children. This tendency to deprive children of a "normal" childhood by pushing them to a greater sophistication is the subject of a number of publications, among them Elkind (1981), Hardyment (1983), and Winn (1983).

Here in New Zealand the pace of change was slower. In the 1950s the strongest influence on mothering was still the Truby King system of strict regulation taught by Plunket nurses who were readily available for advice.

"Ages and stages" research undertaken by the Gesell Institute and disseminated by Ilg and Ames (1946), as well as the more permissive philosophy put forward by Spock (1957), led those working in the field in New Zealand to incorporate an appreciation of individual differences in their theory and practice.

In 1973 the second wave of the women's movement began to protest against the sacrifices and self-denial of motherhood (McKinlay, 1983). Women's consciousness-raising groups were adding to the tension felt by mothers between their role as mothers and feminine identity. The goal of individual fulfilment was confusing to mothers, but by 1976 enough women were thinking in terms of changed roles for Rosemary Novitz (1978) to note that there were distinct differences in the ways that mothering priorities were perceived. She presented these differences in terms of the women's acceptance or rejection of 3 statements about the mother role. She described as -

"traditional", those who supported the statement that a mother's first duty throughout her life was to the family;

"new conventional mothers", those who believed that, as children grew older, a

mother's involvement in their care decreased and that mothers should strike a balance between involvement in childcare and activities outside the house; and

"unconventional mothers", those for whom the role of mother was seen as just one of a number of roles held by women.

Bearing these categories in mind, I asked the mothers in the sample "Are you following your mother's ideas?" (on childrearing). This came immediately after the taped extracts and discussion on the discipline of children. Some of those interviewed said "Times have changed - my life is so different from my mother's!" Some wondered how much of their childrearing practice was conscious and how much subconscious when they thought about their spontaneous reactions to some of the statements on the tape.

Thirty-one said unequivocally that they were following their mothers' ideas on parenting, 40 said they had modified them, and 28 said "no".

A common statement from those who followed their mothers' ideas and from those who had modified them was:

"I hear my mother's voice in my head!"

One woman exclaimed, "I even hear the tone - and now I hear my kids speaking to their dolls in the same voice!"

Answering "Yes"

Those who agreed that they were following their mothers' ideas told of a strong bond with the mother.

"I'm like my mother - she's very fair and trusted us to do the right thing."

Another said, "We turned out well so I basically use the same guidelines".

"Though I read a lot (about child development), automatic responses come up when the children start fighting."

"The more children I have, the more I go back to my mother's ideas."

"I'm not consciously following her ideas but I think she's very influential in my expectations of myself and my children."

The 3 sets of identical twins were interesting in that they all averred that they were following their mothers' ideas quite closely. Whereas they made a number of negative comments about the handling of their growing up as twins, they seemed to need firm standards to return to. None of them broke away from the family home till nearly 20 years of age, 2 pairs attending university from home and the other pair undertaking nurse-training at nearby hospitals.

A mother who identified as Maori said that she refers to the customs of her iwi (tribe) and consequently "the other mothers at te kohanga reo (preschool language nest) think that I am hard on the children but I don't believe in spoiling or giving them everything they ask for!"

Not all the mothers answering in the affirmative to the question "Are you following your mother's ideas?" could be assigned to the category "traditional". Five 1950s mothers had been influenced by the teachings of parents centres and playcentres. One of these mothers was a foundation member of a playcentre on the West Coast, 1 had worked in a childcare centre, and 3 had had primary teacher training, though this did not necessarily

ensure liberal parenting methods.

Answering "I've Modified Her Ideas"

One woman who was interviewed rationalised - "I'm living in a different family now!"

The 1980s mothers who answered that they have modified their mothers' ideas found it difficult to put aside the edicts implanted in their conscience during childhood but said that they use family rules as a base and extend them as they have a better understanding of child development than their mothers.

Nine showed that they were aware of the pressures exerted on them by their religion through the sanctions of guilt. One woman explained, "We weren't stopped but we knew we didn't want to do the wrong thing". There was no significant difference in this respect between those whose mothers were members of the Anglican church and those whose mothers professed Catholicism or other faiths.

As an example of modifying their mothers' ideas, the women interviewed handled toilet-training and bedwetting in a more relaxed way. The main reason for making changes was said to be in order to cut down wrangles with young children, but the improved techniques and equipment in laundry facilities may have been closer to the truth.

While opting to use modified childrearing practices, the women who answered in this category insisted that they were keeping their mothers' values. The values most often quoted were honesty, politeness, co-operation, the importance of education, and a healthy life style.

A 1980s mother suggested that having travelled and lived in an Asian country for 2 years had helped to modify her expectations about child behaviour. Those mothers in the sample with Maori or Pacific Island family backgrounds were confused over to what degree they were following or modifying the patterns of their parents or their traditional culture.

Answering "No"

Among those who answered "no" to this question was one who said, "A yardstick on what I mightn't do! I've made a number of decisions on mistakes they made".

The greatest concern among this group was the transmission of a tradition of low self-esteem and lack of confidence. My general impression was that in many of these 1950s families, children's feelings were discounted and little feedback was given on school, sporting, or cultural successes. "Don't skite" was a commonly heard injunction. The children were expected to restrain their spontaneous enthusiasm, and to a great extent their affectionate gestures were discouraged.

"I give more freedom to my children and show more affection", affirmed one mother who placed herself in the "no" category.

"It annoys me intensely when my mother tries to take control - I just won't do what she says."

"I will never say - 'I'll give you something to cry about'." One 1980s mother refuses to join what she called the "jandal-bashers".

Stemming from their childhood memories, the main features of childrearing practice with which the sisters disagreed were the use of corporal punishment and the lack of understanding over the importance of the child's need to play. Other themes for complaint were strictness about behaviour at mealtimes and being made to finish all the food on one's

plate.

One young 1980s mother had to overcome a maternal message from inside her head that she should have all the washing out on the clothesline by 9 o'clock, leaving the baby to cry if necessary. Commonsense prevailed and she altered routines to suit the infant.

However, the strongest disapprobation lay in the quarter of insufficient and confusing sex information, though the 1980s generation could appreciate the difficulties of their parents with this subject.

Apart from general disapproval of the methods of control that they remembered, the 1980s mothers gave various reasons for not following their parents' ideas, including having been the youngest in the family which meant that they were not in a position to have observed the parent in the early childhood of the older siblings.

One woman lamented, "My mother died when I was 11 - I don't even know my medical history!"

A 1950s mother was so affected by her third child's accidental death at the age of 3 that she mourned excessively and could not be an effective mother to her next 5 children who included sisters whom I interviewed.

Effect of Birth Order on Responses

Table 13

Numbers of Older and Younger Sisters in the 3 Categories of Responses

Category	Older	Younger
Answering yes	17	14
Answering modified	20	20
Answering no	13	15
Totals	50	49

Table 13 shows that there was no more than a slight tendency for older sisters to take their mothers' ideas as their own. Equal numbers were listed in the "modified" category and no more than a slight tendency for younger sisters to reject their mothers' ideas over older sisters. Those in the "no" category could be seen as possibly fitting into Novitz's group of "unconventional" mothers who see the mothering aspect of their lives as one role among others.

Table 14

Numbers of Sister-Pairs Agreeing in Each Category

Category	N
Answering yes	9
Answering modified	11
Answering no	15
Disagree	14
Total	49

There is a familial resemblance in the way that two-thirds of these sister-pairs respond to the question "Are you following your mothers' ideas?" But what accounts for this accord - what are the factors and in what proportions?

The 1950s fathers' occupations were categorised according to the Elley-Irving scale and the categories were combined to produce a blue collar - white collar division. There did not appear to be any correlation between the occupation and whether the 1980s group followed their mothers' example in childrearing practices.

Chapter 7

WHERE DID THEY GET THEIR IDEAS FROM?

Early Childhood Experience

While 31 percent of the sample thought that they were following their mothers' ideas about bringing up their children, the remainder (more than two-thirds) spoke of having to repudiate or at least modify them because so many circumstances in their life styles were different from those of their mothers.

The major sociological change since the 1950s is the size of the family. Eighty-two percent of the women interviewed came from families of 4 or more children; they themselves are stopping when they have 2 or 3. The amount of parental attention available for each of the 1950s siblings was spread more thinly, as was the family income.

Today's parents can share this responsibility with early childhood education organisations. Whereas more than half the postwar children were not attending any preschool group, almost the whole of the present under-5s cohort is covered by opportunities offered by early childhood education bodies. The following 3 tables demonstrate this change.

Table 15

Attendance at Preschool Centres in 1950s (Interviewees)

Category	N
None	53
Kindergarten	33
Playcentre	9
Childcare	4
Total	99

Table 16

*Attendance at Early Childhood Centre (1987) NZ**

Service	%
Kindergarten	39
Playcentre	19
Childcare	20
Kohanga reo	8
Informal playgroups (1)	12
Other services (2)	2
Total	100

(1) Includes personal arrangements with relatives and friends.

(2) Includes state and private primary schools and the Early Childhood Education section of the Correspondence School.

* Source: *From Birth to Death II: The Second Overview Report*, NZ Planning Council, 1989, p.18, based on *Government Management, Vol. II, Education Issues*, 1987, The Treasury, p.63.

Table 17

Interviewees' Use of Early Childhood Centre for Their Children

Service	N
Kindergarten	39
Playcentre	26
Childcare	13
Playgroups	12
Kohanga reo	2
Other	7
Missing frequency	1
Total	100

McKinlay (1983) analysed the ideologies of the early childhood organisations in her doctoral thesis and revealed 3 distinct patterns or paradigms defining the relationship of mothers and their children, which appear to have gradually succeeded one another over the past 80 years.

According to the earliest pattern described by McKinlay, motherhood is seen in terms of a need for both mothers and children to control their individual impulses in response to certain generally held standards of behaviour. Motherhood was defined in terms of duty and training children to good habits. This was the early objective of the Plunket system as quoted above. (There has been a modernisation of these goals and nurses now listen more to the mothers.)

In the 1950s half the mothers did not have access to any preschools, though the Labour government had given money to the Kindergarten Union in 1937 to encourage them to open up more kindergartens. At that time the goal was to produce "good" citizens by controlling children with highly structured activities. The participation of mothers in the actual teaching programme of kindergartens was not introduced till the late 1960s. The 39 mothers in the sample who send their children to kindergarten would have mixed motives. While some of the motivation would be to give the child the benefit of discipline of play among peers, the mother can do other things with her time for 5 half-days.

The involvement of mothers fits with McKinlay's second pattern which she designates as the "motherhood as service" ideal dominant in the other major early childhood organisations such as Plunket, Parents Centre, and Playcentre. This pattern was based on the perception of the child as a developing psychological being, and presents mothering as the task of creating the optimum emotional and physical environment in which the child may develop unharmed. This underlined the rights of the child. Playcentre in particular requires parent participation in the supervision and education of the children. The 29 Playcentre members were putting the needs of their children first but were either training on their own behalf for a career after their stint in Playcentre or were already in part-time employment.

McKinlay points out that from the 1970s, when the second wave of the women's movement arose, a third pattern has been emerging, predicated on the belief that mothers as well as children have a right to self-development and that the interests of mothers and children do not necessarily coincide.

This is reflected in the greater use (and greater supply also) of childcare centres by the 1980s mothers in the general population and 13 mothers in the sample of women whom I interviewed.

The mother's right to her own independence (in McKinlay's nomenclature "Motherhood as a Life Experience") was voiced by at least 20 percent of the interviewees but in terms that made resolution of the conflict between the rights of mothers and children far from simple.

Educational Levels

This generation of mothers received higher levels of education than their mothers. For example, all started at secondary schools, while one-quarter of the 1950s mothers never attended high school, as is shown in the following table.

Table 18
Educational Levels of 1950s and 1980s Mothers Compared

Level	1950s Mothers	1980s Mothers
No secondary education	13	-
2 years' secondary	28	45
University entrance	1	- *
Nursing	1	13
Teaching	5	6
University	1	29 **
Missing frequency	1	1
Other	-	5
Totals	50	99

* Those who got UE went on to tertiary education.
** Includes those who did not complete degrees and those who are currently working for them.

Learning About Children

Apart from the quantity and quality of education received by the women interviewed, they were at school when public discussions centred on the Johnson Report *Growing, Sharing, Learning* (1977). The Johnson Report made wide-ranging recommendations on how to achieve a better climate in schools for individual students by adding social and health education to the curriculum. In the section "Education in Parenthood", there was a clause that schools should engage in parent education (for boys as well as girls, it implied).

However, even where attempts were made to inject the study of human development and relationships into the college curriculum, the implementation of the recommendations was sporadic and dependent on teacher interest.

Nineteen of the women interviewees studied child development in their preparation for teaching and nursing careers.

The Father's Contribution to Childrearing Ideas

The 1980s mothers on the whole said that their fathers had few doubts about what was expected of them. They had to provide the money to maintain the household, undertake the heavier outdoor chores such as chopping the wood and digging the garden, and when necessary discipline the children. They were the breadwinners and head of the house around whom the family revolved. Often the relationships with the offspring were seen as remote by the children. While the fathers may have been fond and even proud of the children, they hardly ever showed it.

As Jock Phillips says in his description of New Zealand males, "At least one source

of anxiety is implied by those jokes that laugh at the husband who has been made effeminate by family duties". Some of this attitude lingers on in the public consciousness to the present time. A South Australian study of new parents by Dr Frances Baum found that while most of the people interviewed agreed with the theory of men sharing the household tasks more or less equally, women were still performing the traditionally entrenched roles - preparing food, laundry, tidying, and shopping, as well as being primarily responsible for childcare (*see Family Matters*, No. 25, April 1990, Australian Institute of Family Studies).

Seventy-one percent of this sample of women when asked if their partners agree with their ideas on childrearing, replied that they do. Equal responsibility for decisions about the children is taken by the fathers, though most mothers take the lead in such matters. Some mothers described their ways of handling awkward situations together:

"We discuss everything (we did have a slight disagreement over meals)."

"We discussed our ideas on discipline before marriage and if we don't agree, we don't do it."

"We stumble along together."

"We talk about everything - he helped me break out of dominating patterns."

Many mothers acknowledged their spouse's support in backing up their membership of Parents Centre, Playcentre, Kindergarten, and other organisations. One woman appreciated her husband's coping with their son's nightmares.

Twenty-two said that the father makes the majority of decisions about the children, and 7 percent responded that their partners disagreed over family discipline. These included some couples who had already separated because of the incompatibility of their principles.

Where the women accepted that they took the greater role in decision making, some sought to explain their spouse's lesser role in the light of family history:

"He was an only child and his mother did not trust him. He was always being compared with his cousins."

"He's less able to express himself - a minister's son with a severe background."

"He had a hard life. His father was a gambler and a drinker."

Some of the characterisations of the partners were given in a resigned tone. The comments referred to inconsistency in discipline, "softness" on daughters, always playing with the children and not being safety conscious, and seeing everything in "black and white".

In 2 examples where Maori women were married to Samoan men, a conflict of cultures was evident and it was the women who did the adjusting. Three women remarked on the difficulty of overcoming the sexism of their husbands whose backgrounds reflected patriarchal attitudes from European nationalities. When the division became too extreme, separation and divorce were sought. Usually the causes of marriage breakdown were multiple, but basic differences about childrearing were of major concern. Four divorced fathers remained available for discussions about their children's welfare. Other mothers coping on their own had to seek elsewhere for support.

With Whom Do They Discuss Their Children?

The question about the partner's agreement or disagreement on their childrearing ideas was followed by one which asked who would be the first person to consult with over a child's problems. More than half (52 percent) confirmed that it would be the husband who would

be appealed to for help as one sharing an equal interest in the children.

In only 10 instances were their own mothers given priority over other "consultants". About the same number gave spontaneous and unprompted negative observations such as:

"Mum isn't interested."

"She hurts me with words about the children."

"Mother forgets about what happened to us."

Sisters on the other hand were next highest on the list of supporters (14 percent). The sisters who were identical twins were in regular communication with each other, one set living in the same suburb, one set living 15 kilometres apart on the same telephone exchange, and the remaining set, though residing in different cities, managing to visit at least once a month.

If family contacts are not possible or desired, friends (17 percent) are asked to give advice, especially if they have already been "through it" with older children. Some find friends through early childhood centres where what can be considered normal development can be observed and worries allayed about parenting skills.

"Being a parent is a demanding job and often a lonely one."

"It's good to talk", said a Maori mother at kohanga reo.

Seven percent would put teachers and other professionals ahead of husbands, family, and friends when seeking help for more disturbing behavioural or health disorders. Some examples of professional consultation were given for children upset by custodial changes in a divorce case, a child with dyslexia, a son with profound deafness, and a daughter with cystic fibrosis. The agencies called in for dealing with these cases were Plunket, local schools, and psychological services.

What Books Do They Refer To?

McKinlay (1983) comments "Mothering is an unprofessional occupation in an increasingly expert world... Middle-class mothers respond to this situation by seeking expert information and thus educate themselves and acquire their own expertise... Working-class people tend to become more like middle-class as they become more affluent".

This prediction for increased use of books on child health and growth was borne out by the interview data. Given that the 1980s mothers had had more general education and more access to information from the media (press, magazines, radio, and television) than their 1950s mothers, it was not unexpected.

Courses on child development of various lengths and depths had been attended by at least one-third of the women interviewed and when asked to name a book on this subject, 78 percent were able to do so. There were some scathing remarks from the non-users of books:

"I don't believe in books!"

"Childcare books are useless."

"It (childrearing) comes naturally."

One person was rather surprised that it was possible to learn from books.

At the time of the interviews the most popular book named by 17 of the mothers was Penelope Leach's *Baby and Child* in several editions. Playcentre publications came in second

place with 11 titles. Dr Chris Green's *Toddler Taming*, an import from Australia, was a favourite with 8 of the mothers of younger children.

Some books feed into a system of beliefs but when the need is developmentally satisfied they are discarded. One mother thought the Plunket "Mothercraft Series" were "all right for the first child but after that I felt I had to justify my decisions".

Four La Leche members gave the title of their text, *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*. Dr Spock's work was still quoted by 3 older mothers who saw him as a forerunner to modern trends but 3 felt more comfortable with James Dobson's *Dare to Discipline*.

New Zealand authors who received mention were Kate Birch (*Positive Parenting*, 8), Trish Gribben (*Pyjamas Don't Matter*, 5), Beverley Morris (*Understanding Children*, 4), Dorothy Butler (*Babies Need Books*, 1), Jenny Phillips (*The Mother Experience*, 1), and Fred Seymour (*Good Behaviour*, 1).

Ideas From Television?

To ascertain whether people have been influenced by subtle messages from television programmes, one should conduct an extensive psychological test. I decided a direct question could give interesting answers. My question was:

> "How much do you think you are affected by ideas about childrearing in television programmes?"

Most of the mothers laughed and dismissed the television material in such terms as "rubbish", "unbelievable", "fantasy", "artificial", "peripheral", "plastic", and "unrealistic crap". Some looked on television as background noise, or a means of relaxation or escape from everyday strife, though 1 qualified the escape as being "too witty, too nice, too clean, too easy".

Twenty said that they seldom watched TV regularly, preferring to listen to the radio, read a book, or play cards. Those who did watch felt that they used their critical faculties, often turning off violence and sex-ridden series, especially when the children might be viewing. A mother with adolescents said:

> "I counter sex and odd relationships with teenagers. I don't like them taking kinkiness as normal."

Another mother spoke of her child's horror on seeing a man killed on a "news" item.

Only 1 woman gave an example of a positive idea about handling an incident with her daughter. It was culled from a "sit-com" about a single-parent family. She was a solo parent herself.

Contact with Grandparents in Childhood

The interviewees were asked about their memories of their grandparents to plumb how far the attitudes of the older generation impinged on their behaviour but while some fascinating insights were revealed, the data was so diverse as to defy analysis.

Eight percent saw their grandparents rarely because of the geographical distance between their homes or because of the ill health of the elderly relatives. Sometimes the reason for not making contact was an estrangement between the generations.

However, 34 percent visited regularly at least 1 of their 4 grandparents and 10 percent

had an elderly relative residing in the household at some time during their childhood. Six percent described unusual combinations of step-grandparents, divorced and remarried grandparents.

Some of those who had close relationships remembered fun-filled holidays on farms or at the beach. They recalled "poppas" who made toys for them and "nanas" who "spoilt them rotten". One grandfather kept oddfellow peppermints in a special cupboard and another "live-in" grandfather bought fish and chips dinner every Friday night. One owned an ice cream shop - their friends thought they were lucky grandchildren!

On the other hand, 9 of the women interviewed shuddered at the recollection of fanatically tidy grandmothers, of cold non-cuddly nanas, and of grandparents whose small houses had no playspace for lively preschoolers. One recalled a particularly difficult grandpa who clowned and made naughty gestures behind her mother's back. He was very manipulative and both sisters were aware of family undercurrents which were frightening because they did not understand them. These memories served as negative models for some women as to how not to treat children.

The Maori sisters spoke of their "kuia" (aunties) who had a strong influence on their lives. Their recollections about their kaumatua (elderly relatives) were interesting - 1 old kuia was remembered for "feeling faces" and thereby foretelling the future. This same Maori informant said that she was aware that they had many family visitors to the marae but was never told who they were and was not taught her ancestral history (whakapapa).

A New Element in Mothers' Lives: Considering Paid Employment

Whatever the previous thoughts about the "proper" way to bring up children, the lives of the present generation of mothers with young children are made more complex by the economic necessity for many of them to contribute to the family purse to maintain their standard of living. In the Christchurch study, *Jobs, Children and Chores*, SROW (1984), 78 percent of the women interviewed said they were working primarily for financial reasons, though it was clear from the responses on job satisfaction that social contact in the workplace was also very important to many of them.

Though for some mothers the child's right to her time appears to be paramount, others wish to assert their own needs to be a person with the opportunity to use their training and skills in suitable employment. A few are postponing childbearing till after they turn 30, especially if they have a commitment to a career. Many of the women interviewed for the SROW study *The Right Time* (1984) had delayed becoming mothers because there were other things in their lives more important to them. Being a mother was not an overriding ambition.

Of the 99 mothers whom I interviewed, aged mainly between 28 and 38, 44 called themselves full-time mothers. They either had children under 5 or were pregnant. It looks as if the pattern of not starting a full-time job till the youngest is at school is dominant. Of 2 who had school-age children and were not employed, 1 was on the dole and the other was looking for work. Others whose children were all at school were working full time (13) or part time (15). One was studying at university.

Six mothers with preschool children worked at full-time jobs. Two of these had husbands who were happy to act as house-husbands. One paid a high fee for quality childcare and the other 3 had changing ad hoc childcare arrangements with relatives and neighbours.

There has been a phenomenal growth in part-time work over the last 20 years and, of the majority of part-time (less than 30 hours a week) workers, some worked at home, for example as a florist or contract typist, and others helped at home with the family business (taxi, tourism, and carrying firms). Several had night cleaning work and 1 was selling cosmetics on commission in the weekends, these so-called "unsocial hours" being worked to solve childcare problems.

The mothers of preschool children who went out of the home for part-time paid work fitted in with their children's attendance at early childhood education centres when possible. Playcentre members were undertaking their parent-helping commitments as well as the part-time employment.

Another group of women with preschoolers provided voluntary help with church agencies, women's refuges, citizens' advice bureaus, and other helping agencies.

"The model of the woman who leaves the paid workforce on the birth of her first child and remains outside the paid workforce for a period of at least five years before re-entering in a part-time capacity, is becoming less appropriate. Most women still temporarily cease paid work for childbearing; no evidence is available to suggest a single 'typical' model of employment behaviour for women after the birth of their first child." (Horsfield and Evans, 1988).

"I want to work as soon as possible," said 1 mother in the study.

"I intend to work next year", said another.

It is clear that, while mothers take responsibility for the welfare of their children, their need to find extra funds for the family and their expectations of continuing careers lead many of them to find alternative care-givers. They do not believe that they are the sole influence on their children's lives but they do feel a division in their lives that is often unsettling.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS

Mothers And Daughters

In researching the childrearing patterns of the 2 generations since World War 2, I have come to the conclusion that there is little linear transmission of ways of bringing up children because of familial, social, and economic changes over the past 30 years. Modelling or imitation is a strong element in early child development but many other variables will influence the next generation's behaviour towards their own children when they become mothers.

As each sister is unique with a different relationship to her mother, making an individual response to the shared background, she has a different perception of family and home and is quite likely to hold on to different "truths" from those remembered by the girl who grew up with her.

It is not even possible to say that the sisters have the "same" mother. Every 1950s mother will have experienced changes in her thinking and life style through the birth of her first baby and will have modified her behaviour and attitudes, however minimally, towards subsequent children. As well, a mother has a life independent of her children and relates to them within the context of that wider world.

There is evidence to suggest that the personality of the offspring might influence the mother's behaviour towards her children (Clarke-Stewart, 1988). For example, temperamental differences in infants' activity levels, irritability, cuddliness, and adaptability lead to varied responses in their mothers.

Lytton (1980) has researched longitudinally the differences in responses that twins evoke from parents and gives valuable evidence for one kind of genotype - environment correlation. One mother in my sample added to this finding, "The nature of my children dictates my behaviour towards them".

Composition and Size of Families

One feature of family living has changed since these sisters were brought up in the 1950s and are now raising their own families. The average size of New Zealand households has fallen below 3 for the first time (Department of Statistics Report, November 1989). This is mainly accounted for by a rise in 1-parent families and childless couples, but there are fewer babies being born. At the last census (1986), 35 percent of all families with children had 1 child, while 37 percent had 2 children. Three-child families made up most of the remainder - 19 percent of all families. The most dramatic downturn, compared with the 1950s, has been

families with 4 or more children, now recorded at 8.5 percent. Not all these families are complete however.

In my sample of 1950s families only 1 consisted of the 2 sisters alone. Sixteen percent had 3 children, 28 percent had 4 children, and 24 percent had 5. Twenty-eight percent had from 6 to 10 children and 5 percent had 12 or more (including stepchildren). The intricate relationships engendered in these larger family households were quite obvious in the material from the interviews, particularly in the replies to the questions about discipline and play activities (Bossard and Boll, 1956).

In *The Sibling Bond* (1982), Bank and Kahn suggest that the sibling relationship can be more significant than the parent-child bond. As the matter of identity attains increasing importance for growing children, they look to intimate family members for confirmation of personal worth or self-esteem. Among larger families are siblings who tend to pair for this purpose. This phenomenon was observed in the present study. I had no control over which other sister in the family to interview except in terms of her being resident in the Wellington region. Apart from this factor, it seems that the majority of women chose for me to interview the sister most compatible with them.

In future family patterns, fewer children will grow up with the experience of being responsible for younger members and fewer children will experience the more relaxed approach to childrearing typically found among parents who have several children. With fewer children, the time of being involved with the parenting of young children will decrease, as will "learning on the job" opportunities. Fewer women will have sisters to refer to.

Birth Order

Twenty of the women interviewed were the first-born in the family. On the whole they were conscious of being required to take responsibility for their younger siblings and on the positive side thought that this experience made them more confident in handling their own babies. On the other hand, being 1 of a large family was no guarantee for problem-free childraising! Of these eldest daughters, half (10) said that they were following their mothers' ideas.

"I've become my mother", was 1 woman's flash of understanding.

Five chose the same careers as their mothers and at least 3 stood in as sons helping the father on the farm or doing outdoor chores.

That first-borns are more likely to be influenced by their parents and later-borns to model themselves on older siblings was a conclusion reached by Judy Dunn in her study of sisters and brothers in "The Developing Child" series (1985).

Parents learn how to be parents on the first-born, who are the family pioneers in parrying the parents' idealistic concepts about child behaviour. Feelings of rivalry arising from displacement of the first-born were discernible from the interview data. Some bitterness about the disciplining of the other siblings led to 3 instances of scapegoating. One oldest sister called herself "devious", as she had learned various strategies while acting as intermediary between siblings and parents.

"I was the eldest of 6 and had no childhood", complained 1 woman, whereas another claimed gleefully, "I ran a gang of boys!"

The position of middle child seemed to have mainly negative aspects.

"My older sisters left me out."
"I lacked confidence."
"I always had to act as peacemaker."

One woman felt her older sister to be intimidating, while another suffered in the shadow of an older sister who was known as "the beautiful one".

Being the "baby" of the family brought mixed blessings; the last-born often escaped the housework drudgery and nearly always had companions to play with, though this sometimes ended up in verbal and physical fighting. Three of the women interviewed believed that they were more outgoing, because being the youngest they had the experience of the older siblings to guide them. But 1 felt that she learned to be a follower.

The 3 sets of identical twins came in the middle positions in their families and so their comments were based around always being with a group of children, though 1 set spoke of sometimes inhabiting a world of their own. One pair described themselves as "tomboyish" through skirmishing with older brothers. One identical twin had a close relationship with a younger male sibling.

Age Differences

Age differences may be important when it is a matter of choosing playmates within the family but affection and companionship are as frequently shown in those with a large gap in their ages as in those born close together (Dunn, 1985). Aggression, hostility, and teasing are shown too. There are no simple, clear connections between place in the family and the way in which their personalities develop. One cannot explain differences between sisters by analysing the importance of birth order, age gap, or gender of the children. Sisters do not choose each other to live with as children but they feel strongly about and understand each other because they have shared a familiar world.

The Relationship Between Sisters

On a subjective reading of the relationship between the sisters whom I interviewed, I rated the warmth/closeness factor in each sister-pair on a scale from 1-5; 1 very close, 2 close, 3 neutral, 4 antagonistic, 5 very antagonistic. In the event, I abandoned the lower 2 categories and assigned only 4 to the neutral group. The other figures were - very close 19 and close 27.

Given that there was a certain amount of personal choice as to which sisters were interviewed, the results are not surprising except in that I detected very close bonds in some sisters who were quite far apart in age and in birth order. "Interval unlike age and sex had almost no effect on the patterning of interaction", wrote Abramovitch, Pepler, and Corter in *Sibling Relationships: Their Nature and Significance Across the Life Span* (1982).

Comparisons

"The work of mutual self-definition seems typically to proceed by way of exaggerating perceived differences and dividing the attributes between sisters", notes Downing (1988).

"I'm skinnier."
"She's more beautiful."
"I'm angular."
"She's more square in the body."
"I'm more matronly."

Six mentioned being taken for twins and others that they were recognised by strangers as sisters.

When describing each other's temperament some harsh words were used in comparing themselves in terms of placidity, flightiness, patience, or outspokeness. But then again the women made some acute observations about their sisters' temperaments and certainly had no difficulty comprehending what was meant by "temperament". The epithets ranged from "party-goer" to "known as the fiery one" or "self-destruction". Propensity towards a hot temper was seen as -

"She's quicker to fly off the handle than me."
"I work on a short fuse."
"I'm more explosive."
"She's more volatile."

One person felt that she was so unlike her sister that she thought she was adopted. Another was used as a sounding board by her siblings who realised that she had an ability to predict parental intentions.

While discussing these differences in temperament, the women spontaneously added other factors that would explain why their childrearing methods varied from those of the original family and each other.

"I've travelled more."
"She's had 2 marriages."
"We married different types of men."
"I have a Christian-based philosophy and she doesn't."
"She's more into personal growth."
"I think her real temperament is suppressed."
"I live in a rural area, she lives in the city."
"She has more nervous energy."
"She has had more education - is more permissive - too liberal for me."

Some sisters chose to live in close geographical proximity and valued each other's help with childrearing. While Julie Park (1982) stresses the importance of supportive relationships over quite lengthy periods, particularly to families with preschool children, she comments that this type of friendship is a neglected dimension in the analysis of social life.

Partner's Voice Versus Mother's Voice

From this study it is apparent that the father's role in regard to the children is changing. While the 1950s father appeared to be mostly a figure of authority (even when he was not

physically present), the 1980s father has a diminished disciplinary role. Phillips (1987) documents some of these changes in his chapter "The Bloke Under Siege 1950-86" and Rosemergy (1982) gives an overview of the research pertaining to the changing role, stressing the possibilities for nurturant behaviour in the male given the time and opportunity. The sharing of the care of the children as well as some of the household chores has been accepted as the norm for parenting in at least half of the 1980s families covered by this sample. The partner's voice is heard above the 1950s mother's voice.

The Changing Role of Women

In 1960 Ausubel, an American visitor commenting on the cultural patterns in this country, said of the New Zealand mother:

> "Her paramount goal is still to be an efficient, capable, hard-working and thrifty homemaker and to give her family stability and cohesiveness through her personal strength and sure-footed adherence to the straight and narrow path of conventional virtue".

For the 1980s mothers only vestiges of this traditional attitude of "women's place in the home" persists and the stigma against working mothers has practically disappeared.

The Household Labour Force Survey of 1985 showed that three-fifths of all married women under 50 years of age were in paid employment. Two-thirds of the women interviewed are contributing to the family income through paid (mostly part-time) work.

As James and Saville-Smith (1989) note "Women are primarily identified with and committed to work they carry out, unpaid, within the home. That work consists of both the fulfilment of the partner's and children's material needs through housework and their psychological needs through emotional support. The primacy of this commitment remains whether or not women are in paid labour". Two women whom I interviewed were holding down professional jobs where they were earning more than their husbands and felt that the marital relationship was balanced on a fine line depending on maintenance of the partner's self-esteem. They were continually reassessing their priorities concerning family matters such as responsibility for the children and household with the satisfaction from their paid employment. These women would hardly fit Novitz's third category of "unconventional", where the mother role is just one of many.

With longer secondary education and tertiary opportunities available in the 1980s, women's career aspirations have soared. One-sixth of the women interviewed are taking courses in order to upgrade their employment chances. These included a mature entrant to teacher training, others finishing interrupted university studies, and 2 improving their accountancy qualifications through correspondence.

As they thought back through their lives, some women traced their "liberation" from more conventional ideas of women's role.

One woman said that her husband was responsible for educating her to be more assertive. Another said, "I've liberated myself. I stuck to having 1 child and now I'm teaching other women to be strong".

Two ascribed their new awareness to Playcentre training and 1 found more self-confidence after a stint on a Kindergarten committee. Confidence was gained by another

through involvement in sporting activities; "I now do my own thing", she claimed.

Sometimes liberation ended in divorce. Two sisters with Maori backgrounds who had found themselves in violent relationships sought separation then divorce. They had arranged childcare for their total of 6 children and had begun communication skills programmes with Telecom in order to obtain better paid jobs. A lesbian mother planned for a divorce after she "came out".

The "kiwi" male macho stereotype, as illustrated in Alison Gray's *The Jones Men* (1983), was bitterly described by 1 divorcee. "My ex-husband didn't agree with any of my ideas (about childrearing). There was a strong competitiveness in his family... he had to keep proving himself. He put everyone down, sucked all my energy, chased all my friends away. If I achieved anything, he'd say, 'Think you're smart!' He said that women were dumb or thick".

Goals For Their Children

When asked what goals the women interviewed had for their children or how they saw their children's future, the majority expressed positive and realistic objectives. They hoped their children would grow up into happy, well-adjusted adults. They did not expect their childrearing methods to accomplish these goals, merely to make the most of the children's potential and give them some skills in coping with everyday living.

The importance of getting a good education was mentioned often, especially by those of thwarted ambitions who had either left school early or had not taken advantage of offerings of further education. One mother made a point of telling me in front of her 2 school-aged daughters that she became pregnant while still at college as if warning them not to do the same. (She was close to completing a B.A. degree as a mature student.)

Six responses to this question emphasised that the choices of future options of career paths must remain with the individual sons and daughters. Two women stressed that they would not push their children into university courses as they had been by their education-starved mother.

"I won't put them into boxes."
"I believe children are regimented too early."
"I wanted to join the Navy but I wasn't allowed."

Ten commented on the child's need for freedom, trust, and independence, seemingly reflecting lacks in their own upbringing. There were several references to "letting them go within reason" and "growing up with your children".

A concern about the teenage years was uppermost in some minds, the pitfalls being drug-abuse and glue-sniffing. One mother felt apprehensive about the dubious state of the world saying "I will fight for my children - I see myself as the line between the world and them - the last line of defence".

Four were not willing to commit themselves. They were just aiming to keep going from day to day, refusing to be optimistic about the future. The person who had recently resettled her family after being in a women's refuge was not prepared to speculate on their prospects.

Were the sisters' goals the same or different? The greater number (38 pairs)

concurred in their goals. Of the 12 pairs of sisters who differed when expressing their hopes for their children's futures, 3 were based on the Christian beliefs of 1 sister and the non-adherence to these beliefs by the other. Two pairs differed on their opinion of the importance of education. "Education is a farce", proclaimed 1 sister. The remainder varied on how much protection to offer their children, older sisters wanting to be more protective than younger sisters.

Are Parents To Blame For Their Children's Behaviour?

Those who blame parents for the behaviour of their children should note that it is no longer certain that socialisation by parents is any more important than that of peers.

Although more has been discovered over the last decade about human development, we still do not have clear-cut answers about whether, how, and how much parents influence their children's development. Morris (1983) writes, "A few parental mistakes, misunderstandings, or even a shocking experience do not change the main direction of children's lives".

While women of today refer to models of childrearing methods used by their mothers, many variables in their life styles affect the degree to which they follow them. And being sisters does not necessarily mean having the same ideas.

Helen May (1987) speaking for the women born in the 1950s says "We were reared upon contradictory messages concerning femininity, masculinity, equality, and careers. We may have rejected some of our mothers' values but despite our personal and collective revolutions, we have found this inheritance difficult to resolve as we 'manage' and/or balance the various dimensions of our own lives".

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire Schedule

A.
1. Number for file.
2. When were you born?
3. Where were you born?
4. Could you tell me details of the family into which you were born?
5. Which sister will I be interviewing?
6. Did you go to a preschool - which type?
7. Where did you go to primary school? Any others?
8. Which secondary school did you attend? Any others?
9. Did you have any tertiary training? What kind?
10. Could you tell me about your employment history - before you had children?
11. Have you travelled overseas? Where?
12. What was the date of your marriage/partnership?
13. What is your status now - married, de facto, separated, divorced, widowed?
14. What children do you have? Sex? Birthdates?
15. Are you employed now? Full-time, part-time, homemaker?
16. What is your spouse's occupation?

B.
17. At what age did your mother marry?
18. How far did your mother go in her education?
19. What employment did your mother have before she had children and later?
20. What was your mother's religion?
21. What was the language in your mother's home when she was young?
22. At what age did your father marry?
23. How far did your father go in his education?
24. What was your father's main employment?
25. What was your father's religion?
26. What was the language in your father's home when he was young?

C.
27. How important was breastfeeding to your mother?
28. What was her opinion about "spoiling" babies?
29. With whom did she leave her babies?
30. What did she do about toilet-training?
31. Tell me about mealtimes in your home when you were little.
32. How did your mother regard tidiness in the home?
33. How did you mother handle your anger?

34. How important was your attendance at school?
35. How important was it for you to do your homework?
36. Tell me about your play activities when you were 8 years old.
37. What chores were you given when you were young?
38. Were you allowed to go nude around the house?
39. Who told you about menstruation?
40. How were you disciplined?
41. What was your mother's opinion of working mothers?
42. What was your mother's attitude towards other races?
43. What was you mother's attitude towards homosexuality?
44. Tell me about your contact with your grandparents.

D. 45. Responses to the audio tape (Lambert *et al.*)

E. 46. Are you following your mother's ideas in bringing up your children?
47. Does your partner agree with your ideas?
48. With whom do you discuss the children's behaviour?
49. Do you watch much TV? Have you learnt anything about family relationships from any programmes?
50. What books on child development do you remember as useful?
51. What preschool services have you used?
52. How does your sister differ from you - physically, in temperament, ideas on childrearing, life style?
53. What do you hope for your children's future?

APPENDIX 2

Table 19

Comparison of Scores of Matched Pairs of Sisters On "Discipline" Tape Using the Lambert et al. *Scales*

Variable		Same score	Older less restrictive	Younger less restrictive
Scale 1	Help withholding	17	16	15
Scale 2	Comfort withholding	17	16	15
Scale 3	Temper control	17	16	15
Scale 4	Insolence control	9	22	17
Scale 5	Siding with baby	6	19	23
Scale 6	Attention denial	27	10	11
Scale 7	Autonomy control	11	15	22
Scale 8	Guest restriction	19	13	16
Scale 9	Siding with guest	2	23	23
Scale 10	Social temper control	13	16	19

Note: N = 48 pairs of sisters

Table 20

Group Means on the Lambert Scales Compared Across Older and Younger Sisters

Scale item		Older sister (N=49)	Younger sister (N=48)
Scale 1	Help withholding	34.25	33.04
Scale 2	Comfort withholding	38.95	33.51
Scale 3	Temper control	48.57	47.92
Scale 4	Insolence control	42.01	44.27
Scale 5	Siding with baby	38.10	37.07
Scale 6	Attention denial	39.80	39.24
Scale 7	Autonomy control	52.04	56.60
Scale 8	Guest restriction	45.92	51.56
Scale 9	Siding with guest	49.87	49.32
Scale 10	Social temper control	54.25	56.08

Table 21

Matched-pair T-tests Comparing Scores on the Lambert et al. *Scales for Age-modified Pair-order Groups: Olders Have To Be 33 or More, Youngers 32 or Under*

(N=35) Variable	Mean difference	Standard error	T
Scale 1	1.42	2.29	0.62
Scale 2	6.43	4.87	1.32
Scale 3	0.57	4.67	0.12
Scale 4	-0.95	2.83	-0.34
Scale 5	3.81	2.79	1.36
Scale 6	1.43	7.65	0.19
Scale 7	-4.29	5.17	-0.83
Scale 8	-10.71	4.50	-2.38*
Scale 9	0.29	2.27	0.13
Scale 10	1.67	3.15	0.53

Note: * $p < .05$